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*The Historiography and Memory
of the Crusades
in the Modern Arab World*

Edited by

Amar S. Baadj
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Foreword by

Jonathan Phillips

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The Historiography and Memory of the Crusades in the Modern Arab World

Eds. Amar S. Baadj, Ahmed M. Sheir

eISBN 978-615-6696-89-2

Studies in Pre-Modern Arab History and East-West Encounters, vol. 1

Responsible publisher: Teodora C. Artimon

<https://trivent-publishing.eu/81-studies-in-pre-modern-arab-history>

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First published in 2025 by Trivent Publishing

Trivent Publishing

1119 Budapest, Etele ut 59–61

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of people and institutions have played crucial roles in the production of this volume. First of all, the co-editors would like to express their sincere thanks to the team at Trivent Publishing. In particular, we are most grateful to Teodora C. Artimon for her enthusiastic support of this book as well as the series in which it appears and for providing expert assistance and oversight at every step of the publication process.

Ahmed Sheir significantly benefited from the Fritz Thyssen Fellowship (2021–22), awarded for his project “Between Memory and Historiography: The Crusades in Modern Egyptian Historical Scholarship”, which was hosted by Professor Albrecht Fuess at Philipps-Universität Marburg. This fellowship enabled him to initiate his research on the memory and historiography of the Crusades in modern Egypt and strengthened his ongoing association with Philipps-Universität Marburg. It also facilitated the organization of the online lecture series “Rethinking Memory and Historiography of the Crusades in the Middle East” (2021–22), which played a pivotal role in shaping the themes of this volume and enriching discussions on Crusade historiography. Since 2022, Sheir has continued his work on this volume while serving as a research fellow on the Arabic Fragments in the Cairo Genizah, as part of the ongoing ERC “APCG” project, based at Trinity College Dublin in collaboration with the Cambridge University Library. This fellowship provided a crucial platform for further developing his research and actively contributing to the editing of this volume.

Amar S. Baadj has benefitted greatly from his association since 2016 with the DFG-Leibniz sponsored research group on “The Contemporary History of Historiography” based at the University of Trier under the direction of Professor Lutz Raphael. It was while employed as a research fellow in this project that he commenced his study of the modern Arab historiography of the medieval period, resulting in an international conference (Trier,

November 2017) and an edited volume entitled *A Handbook of Modern Arabic Historical Scholarship on the Ancient and Medieval Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

The editors would like to sincerely thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their rigorous evaluations and constructive feedback on the chapters which have greatly enhanced the quality of this collection. They are also most grateful to Jonathan Phillips (Royal Holloway, London University), for kindly writing a foreword to the volume. Finally, both of the editors would like to take this opportunity to extend their deep appreciation to all of the chapter authors for their hard work and their valuable contributions.

Amar S. Baadj (Relizane, 25.05.2025)

Ahmed M. Sheir (Marburg, 25.05.2025)

FOREWORD

Jonathan Phillips*

This volume constitutes a fresh and significant contribution to the historiography of the crusades and the Muslim Near East. Ahmed Sheir and his colleagues, greatly assisted by Amar S. Baadj's enviably fluent translations, have produced an impressive, broad-ranging and diverse series of papers that will do much to put down a marker for the sheer volume and diversity of work on the crusades in Arabic scholarship. For most of the twentieth century and even until recent years, scholars of the crusades and the Muslim world tended to keep at arms-length from one another, in part by reason of geography, in part because of different historiographical traditions, in part through politics, and overarching all of this, I suspect, the issue of language. In 1999 Carole Hillenbrand's landmark book *Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* did much to introduce western scholars and students to the medieval Muslim world.¹ This, combined with a far greater public curiosity about the history and legacy of the crusades after the use of crusade imagery in and after the 9/11 terror attacks, prompted a considerable volume of work. From a western academic perspective one consequence was the up-to-date translation from Arabic of important narrative texts such as Ibn al-Athir, Usama ibn Munqidh and Ibn Shaddad, and then, just as importantly, non-narratives, such as poetry, sermons, pilgrimage documents or compendia including Ibn abi Usaybi'ah's huge work *The Best Accounts of the Classes of Physicians*.² There is also, much more recently, a far greater interaction

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¹ Carole Hillenbrand, *Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

² Ibn al-Athir, *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athir for the Crusading Period from al-Kamil fi'l-Ta'rikh*, trans. Donald S. Richards, 3 volumes, *Crusade Texts in Translation*, 13, 15, 17 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006-8); Usama ibn Munqidh, *The Book of Contemplation: Islam and the Crusades*, trans. Paul M. Cobb (London: Penguin, 2008); Baha al-Din Ibn Shaddad,

between historians of the crusades and the Muslim Near East. This is happening at academic conferences, such as the Leeds International Medieval Congress and the Society for the Medieval Mediterranean. Likewise at the most recent quadrennial conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East held at Royal Holloway, University of London in 2022, or the 'Hillenbrand 25 Years on' workshop held at Groningen in October 2024. All of these events have featured participants from a range of academic backgrounds, although the majority of the Arabic-language scholars are based in western educational institutions.

While such developments are hugely welcome and exciting for all concerned, there is still a long way to go. The greater use of hybrid technology allowing people remote access to talks and events is a huge boon; the series organized by Ahmed Sheir from which some of these papers derive being an obvious example. But although it is relatively easy to find overviews of western historiography on the crusades, this is not the case for the Arab world.³ We have a need, therefore, to recognize, understand and learn from the approaches and interpretations these scholars have chosen to take and also to see the traditions in which they have developed.

While in recent years scholars from and/or based in the Eastern Mediterranean have been publishing important research in European languages, notably Taef el-Azhari, Abbès Zouache and Ahmed Sheir, the Arabic language work of many of their colleagues remains inaccessible for the

The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin or al-Nawadīr al-Sultaniyya wa'l-Mahasīn al-Yusufiyya by Baha' al-Din Ibn Shaddad, trans. Donald S. Richards, Crusade Texts in Translation 7 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); *Muslim Sources of the Crusader Period: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. James E. Lindsay and Suleiman A. Mourad (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2021); *Gouvernance et Libéralités de Saladin d'après les données inédites de six documents arabes*, ed. and trans. Jean-Michel Mouton, Dominique Sourdel and Janine Thomine-Sourdel (Paris: L'académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 2015); Ibn abi Usaybi'ah, trans. Emilie Savage-Smith, Geert Jan van Gelder, Franak Hilloowala et al., *A Literary History of Medicine: 'Uyūn al-anbā' fī ṭabaqāt al-aṭibbā' of Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah (d. 1270)*, edited, translated and analyzed by The ALHOM Team (Leiden: Brill, 2019); abridged as *Anecdotes and Antidotes: A Medieval Arabic History of Physicians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

³ See Christopher J. Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Norman J. Housley, *Contesting the Crusades* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) and the forthcoming chapter by Christoph Maier in volume 1 of *The Cambridge History of the Crusades*, ed. Jonathan Phillips et al., 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2026).

majority of western academics.⁴ Several of the essays here will help redress that; of course, language may keep much hidden, but having a sense of the sheer range and variety of work will offer an insight into the study of the crusades in a particular time and/or place as the papers here by Sheir, Awad and Mounir show. In many ways, the barrier of language exists in reverse too – an absence of good translations into Arabic of Latin or Old French texts, and likewise, the poor availability of up-to-date secondary scholarship, for example, avoiding the problematic interpretation of Steven Runciman, work that reviewers described as out of date even on its initial publication in 1952.⁵ Such a situation can, therefore, mirror the limitations of crusade scholars who cannot read Arabic, but this volume will, at the bare minimum, show English language historians what they need to look for, or to be aware of. That in itself can stimulate either a wish to pursue a line of enquiry following, say, the chapter by Raheel here, or to signpost a particular source or even to look to make a personal contact.

These papers also shed valuable light on the variety of perspectives that scholars in the Islamic world have chosen to adopt. One such case is in the chapter by Baadj looking at the Marxist-based interpretations of Mahmud Isma‘il, and then showing how he, in turn influenced further generations of scholars (and presumably, public perceptions) of the crusades. Within this collection, we also get a clear sense of the variety of religious, political and cultural contexts in which scholars in the Arabic language operate. We have here also a vital glimpse of the regional and chronological variations encompassed by these issues which will help to break down the perception of crusade scholarship in the Muslim Near East as monolithic.

Also of great interest here are the diverse forms of evidence in play. To bring in non-narrative sources such as folk epics (Sokolov) and film (Ragheb, noting the vital political context too) can help us to appreciate better the breadth of scholarship here, but also to get a far better insight into the impact

⁴ For example: Taef el-Azhari, *Queens, Eunuchs and Concubines in Islamic History, 661-1257* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019); multiple fine articles by Abbès Zouache including: ‘Écrire l’histoire des croisades aujourd’hui, en Orient et en Occident’, in: *Construire la méditerranée, penser les transferts culturels*, eds Rania Abdellatif, Yassir Benhima, Daniel König and Elisabeth Ruchaud (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013), pp. 120-47; Ahmed M. Sheir, *The Prester John Legend between East and West during the Crusades: Entangled Eastern-Latin Mythical Legacies* (Budapest: Trivent Publishing, 2022).

⁵ See the summary by Jonathan S. C. Riley-Smith in *Crusades* 6 (2007), pp. 216-17.

and the reception of the crusades in both the medieval and the modern worlds.

Part of the excitement and enjoyment of what we all do is, of course, to see new perspectives, ideas and information. Too long underappreciated and often unknown in terms of scope and volume, it is hoped that the scholarship manifest in these essays does much to bring a wealth of learning to a new and wider audience.

INTRODUCTION

Amar S. Baadj,* Ahmed M. Sheir**

I. The State of the Field

Interest in the legacy and memory of the Crusades in the modern Arab World has been rather modest compared to the amount of attention devoted to studying the impact of the Crusades on modern European thought and culture. Most studies that take up the topic of modern Arab reception of the Crusades are largely concerned with how the Crusades have been utilized in contemporary political and religious discourses in Arab and Islamic countries. They have very little to say about the modern Arabic historiography of the Crusades. This is particularly true of some recent English language scholarship that has discussed the impact of the Crusades on the modern Islamic World.¹

A notable exception is a French article by Abbès Zouache which presents an overview of contemporary trends in Crusade historiography both in Western and in Arab academia.² Zouache displays a great familiarity with Arab (especially Egyptian) research on the Crusades and the conditions under which it is produced and he makes some valuable observations about it.

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¹ See for example Carole Hillenbrand, "The Legacy of the Crusades", in C. Hillenbrand, ed., *Islam and the Crusades: Collected Papers* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022) pp. 132-148; Mona Hammad and Edward Peters, "Islam and the Crusades: A Nine Hundred-Year-Long Grievance?", in A. J. Andrea and A. Holt, eds., *Seven Myths of the Crusades* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2015) pp. 127-149.

² Abbès Zouache, "Écrire l'histoire des croisades, aujourd'hui, en Orient et en Occident", in R. Abdellatif, Y. Benhima, D. König, and E. Ruchaud, eds. *Construire la Méditerranée, penser les transferts culturels* (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012), pp. 120-147.

Unfortunately, because of the article's vast subject matter, the amount of space devoted to Arabic scholarship is limited and the reader is left wishing that more had been said about it.³

In her monograph on twentieth-century Syrian historical scholarship, Ulrike Freitag devotes one chapter to the discussion of a major international conference sponsored by the Syrian presidency in Damascus in 1987 in recognition of the eight-hundredth anniversary of Saladin's famous victory over the Crusaders at the Battle of Ḥaṭṭīn (summer of 1187).⁴ The chapter focuses mainly on the political uses and ramifications of this particular conference in terms of internal Syrian politics at that time and Syria's place in regional and Pan-Arab relations. It says rather little about the historiography of the Crusades and the medieval period in general in Syria, while the rest of the book focuses mostly on Syrian scholarship on the Ottoman and modern periods.

Indeed, modern Arab historical scholarship on the medieval Islamic period has long been neglected by Western specialists in Islamic history and Arabic secondary sources are largely absent from many of the key reference works and bibliographies in the field. Fortunately, this situation has begun to change in the last few years. A major turning point was the publication of the *Handbook of Modern Arabic Scholarship on the Ancient and Medieval Periods* in 2021.⁵ Unfortunately, due to the late withdrawals of a couple of contributors, the above-mentioned reference volume does not contain a chapter on Crusade studies in the Arab World. It does, however, contain several valuable articles that considerably overlap with the subject of the Crusades, most notably the survey of Mamluk studies in the Arab World by Emad Abou-Ghazi and the bibliographical essay on the study of Medieval Europe in the Arab World by Al-Amin Abouseada.⁶

The present volume offers a fresh perspective on the Crusades, examining them through the rich tapestry of Arab historiographical and cultural narratives. It highlights the vital role of historical memory in shaping

³ The first article of this volume by Ahmed Sheir provides a comprehensive historiographical and academic introduction, analyzing modern studies on the memory and historiography of the Crusades in the West.

⁴ Ulrike Freitag, *Gesichtsschreibung in Syrien 1920-1990: Zwischen Wissenschaft und Ideologie* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1991) pp. 363-376.

⁵ Amar S. Baadj, ed., *A Handbook of Modern Arabic Historical Scholarship on the Ancient and Medieval Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

⁶ Emad Abou-Ghazi, "Mamluk Studies in the Arab World", in A. Baadj, ed., *Handbook*, pp. 481-533; Al-Amin Abouseada, "Modern Arabic Historical Scholarship on Medieval Europe: A Bibliographical Study", in A. Baadj, ed., *Handbook*, pp. 595-616.

contemporary views of these events. By drawing on a diverse array of sources—including historical texts, cultural epics, and cinematic representations—the project seeks to achieve several key objectives. First, it will trace the evolution of Arab scholarly perspectives on the Crusades during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reflecting the broader intellectual, cultural, and political shifts of those times. Second, it presents a survey of lesser-known Arabic historiographical works, making them accessible to English-speaking academics. Third, the volume provides an insightful exploration of how the Crusades have been received culturally, examining their portrayal in epics and films. Furthermore, this collection of studies lays the groundwork for future scholarly endeavors, encouraging deeper investigations into the themes of historical memory and public culture in the Arab world that still require extensive research. This book represents a significant first step in addressing these crucial areas, opening up new avenues for exploration and understanding.

The editors are confident that the present volume will be of great interest to all scholars interested in the reception of the Crusades in the Modern Arab World and furthermore that it will help to bridge the divide between Arab and Western scholars of the Crusades by making them more aware of each other's work. It contains seven chapters, the first five of which concern various aspects of modern Arab historiography of the Crusades, while the sixth deals with Arab literary reception of the Crusades and the last chapter with the Crusades in Arab film. Summaries of each chapter follow below.

II. Summary of the Chapters

In the first chapter Ahmed Sheir discusses important developments in Egyptian intellectual history of the nineteenth century. This was a period which witnessed the transition from traditional, "medieval" Arab-Islamic historiography, whose last Egyptian representative was Al-Jabartī (d. 1825), to the beginning of the modern Arab historiography of the Crusades with the appearance of the pioneering book on the subject by Sayyid al-Ḥarīrī in 1899. Sheir also examines in depth how leading nineteenth-century Islamic thinkers like Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (d. 1873), Al-Afghānī (d. 1897), and 'Abduh (d. 1905) perceived the Crusades, and how their understanding of the Crusades influenced the discourse of twentieth-century ideological movements in the Arab World.

Chapter Two by Mohamed Mones Awad is the first comprehensive survey of modern Arab historical scholarship on the Crusades published in English.

This is important because most Western historians of the Crusades do not read Arabic and therefore such a reference tool will be of great use to them in forming an idea about the current state of Crusade studies in the Arab World. Awad is one of the most important contemporary Arab historians of the Crusades and he has pioneered the publication of Arabic-language bibliographies and handbooks of Crusade studies. In this particular bibliographical study, he focuses especially on the period from the 1940s, when the first academic history departments were established in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, until the time of writing in 2023. His article not only highlights the important contributions of Egyptian scholars of the Crusades, but also gives substantial coverage to the development of Crusade studies in Bilād al-Shām, Iraq, and the Arabian Peninsula as well as the Maghreb.

Mohamed Raheel has made a valuable contribution to a specific and important issue in the modern Arab historiography of the Crusades, namely, the question of the treatment of the Fatimids' role in the Crusades by contemporary Arab historians. He pays attention to the influence which contemporary political and sectarian concerns have exercised on some historians' treatment of this subject. Broadly speaking, Raheel identifies three major currents in Arab scholarship on Fatimid-Crusader relations: a sectarian Sunnī position, a sectarian Shī'ī trend which is apologetic in its approach, and a more objective, professional current which attempts to understand the history of the Crusades in its proper context.

Amr Moneer has presented a case study about teaching and research on the Crusades in the history department of Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Moneer says that in this particular institution the Crusades were understood and interpreted in the framework of a conservative, sectarian environment that was highly-influenced by the political and religious ideologies of the Saudi state. He demonstrates how ideology influenced the naming of history courses and the titles of published works, the choice of topics for students' theses, and some basic assumptions about the study of history and the nature of relations between the Islamic World and the West. Perhaps most noticeably, Moneer detects a very pronounced Islamocentrism in the history curriculum, and a prevailing belief that the Crusades have not yet ended, but rather continue in our own contemporary period in different forms.

Amar S. Baadj has explored the treatment of conflict between Muslims and European Christians in the medieval Mediterranean world in the works of an important and highly-influential contemporary Egyptian Marxist historian – Maḥmūd Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Rāziq. His article takes into account not only the Crusades but also the Iberian Reconquista and conflicts in the central

Mediterranean (Sicily, the southern Italian Peninsula, and Ifrīqīya). Most noteworthy is that Ismāʿīl downplays the importance of religious and sectarian factors in these struggles, emphasizing that such wars were primarily economic in nature and merely assumed a religious garb.

Oleg Sokolov tackles the question of the perception of the Crusades in the early modern Arab Near East in non-elite circles. To do this, he utilizes an important genre of late-medieval and early modern sources known as the Arabic popular epics such as the epics of Sultan Baybars, the Banū Hilāl, and Dhāt al-Himma, among others. Before the age of the radio, public recitations of such epics were a major source of entertainment for the common classes in the great cities of the Arab World, and thus they reveal something of the popular image of the Crusades and their participants (both real and legendary) and how this memory of the Crusades influenced attitudes towards Europeans and the West in the Arab World.

Finally, Fadi Ragheb takes up the portrayal of the Crusades and the great hero of the Crusades, Saladin, in Arab cinema. Specifically, he focuses on the famous 1963 film by the renowned Egyptian director Youssef Chahine entitled *Al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*. Ragheb presents a novel and highly innovative re-reading of this film. He draws attention to the film's rich and complex Christian symbolism, and also argues that this film expresses the perspective of Chahine as an Arab Christian who promoted a vision of Muslim-Christian cooperation, equality, and mutual respect within the framework of Pan-Arabist and Nasserist ideals.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL MEMORY OF THE CRUSADES IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY EGYPT

AHMED MOHAMED SHEIR*

Abstract

This article examines how the Crusades were remembered and interpreted in nineteenth-century Egypt, exploring the intersection of historiography, intellectual thought, and national identity. It traces the evolution of Crusade memory from medieval Arabic sources to the late Ottoman period, focusing on key Egyptian figures such as al-Jabartī and Rifāʿa al-Ṭaḥṭāwī. Their works bridge traditional Islamic historiography with emerging nationalist perspectives, shaping how the Crusades were perceived in the context of colonialism and resistance. The study highlights how Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 revived comparisons between European imperialism and the medieval Crusades, influencing historical narratives. It also examines how intellectuals like Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī employed the Crusades as a framework to critique European colonialism and advocate for Islamic unity and modernization. The publication of the first Arabic book on the Crusades in 1899 marked a pivotal moment in Egyptian historiography, reflecting a growing scholarly engagement with the topic. Ultimately, this research underscores how the Crusades were integrated into Egyptian historical consciousness, evolving from religious conflict to a symbol of colonial resistance and national identity, shaping modern Arab historiography and public memory of the Crusades.

* Trinity College Dublin/ Damanhour University/Philipps-Universität Marburg. This article was written during the author's fellowship at Trinity College Dublin, with research funding and data collection carried out during the Fritz Thyssen Fellowship at Philipps-Universität Marburg (2021–2022), and with support from the author's home department at Damanhour University.

Introduction

The medieval crusading movement and its legacy have profoundly influenced relations between the East and West, shaping historical narratives, collective memory, and interfaith dynamics between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. The impact of the Crusades extends beyond their medieval origins, continuing to influence modern perceptions of religious and cultural interactions. While traditionally framed as a series of military conflicts between Christian Europe and the Muslim world, the Crusades also played a crucial role in shaping political, economic, and intellectual exchanges across the Mediterranean and beyond. These influences persist today, as historical memory of the Crusades remains a powerful lens through which contemporary geopolitical and cultural conflicts are interpreted.

This study explores how Egyptians remembered and conceptualized the Crusades during the nineteenth century, a period marked by both colonial interventions and the intellectual resurgence of Arab nationalism. It focuses on the interplay between scholarly interpretations and public discourse, particularly in the context of anti-colonial sentiments and efforts to construct a national historical narrative. Recent scholarship, especially in Europe and America, has primarily focused on linking the Crusades and counter-Jihad narratives to modern political-religious Islamic movements, often emphasizing associations with contemporary extremist ideologies. This narrow focus has frequently overshadowed a broader academic and historiographical engagement with the Crusades as a historical phenomenon, reducing it to a politicized and religiously charged subject rather than an integral part of medieval and modern historiography.

To address this gap, this study examines nineteenth-century Arabic historical writings on the Crusades, situating them within the broader framework of historiographical evolution and collective cultural memory. By tracing the transmission of Crusade narratives from late medieval Arabic sources to the intellectual movements of the nineteenth century, this study highlights how the Crusades were reinterpreted in response to contemporary political challenges. It considers the impact of Bonaparte's invasion of Egypt in 1798, which revived historical comparisons to earlier Crusader invasions, and explores al-Jabartī's historiographical recollections of the Crusades, particularly in relation to his eyewitness account of the French occupation. The discussion then moves to an analysis of the transmission and perception of the Crusades in nineteenth-century Egypt, culminating in the publication of the first Arabic book dedicated to the Crusades in 1899. Finally, this study

examines the enduring impact of nineteenth-century Crusade historiographical memory in early twentieth-century Egypt, setting the foundation for a deeper understanding of modern Arab perspectives on the Crusades in both academic and public discourse.

By situating the memory of the Crusades within the broader intellectual and historiographical transformations of nineteenth-century Egypt, this study demonstrates how historical narratives were mobilized to shape national identity, resist colonialism, and reinterpret the past in light of contemporary struggles. In doing so, it challenges prevailing Eurocentric and politicized interpretations of Crusade memory and highlights the crucial role of Arab historians in reshaping historical discourse.

Latin and Arabic Concept of Crusades in Scholarship

When the Latin Christian forces (Franks) moved to fight the Muslims in the Levant and the Holy Land, the concept of the Crusades was identified by contemporaneous Latin sources as an *expedition* (expedition), *passagium* (passage), *iter Hierosolymitanum* (journey to Jerusalem), or *peregrinatio* (pilgrimage).¹ Twelfth-century sources such as, for example, Albrecht of Aachen, identified those Latin forces heading to fight the Saracens (Muslims), as “Quos peregrini et cruce signati (those who were pilgrims and marked with the cross)”.²

According to Michael Markowski, the cross was associated with the crusading movement into the Holy Land that began in 1096 and the crusaders, thus, were commonly identified by the cross. The term *cruce signatus* was used by Pope Innocent III (p. 1198-1216) during the Fourth

¹ Benjamin Weber (ed.), *Crusade: The Uses of a Word from the Middle Ages to the Present*, *Crusades-Subsidia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024), 8-11; Daniel G. König, “1412: Al-Qalqašandī Historicises the Crusades”, *Transmediterranean History* 5 :1 (2023), 1-8, here, 7; Christopher T. Maier, “When Was the First History of the Crusades Written?,” in *The Crusades: History and Memory*, ed. T.K. Nielsen and KV Jensen, *Outremer. Studies in the Crusades and the Latin East* 12 (Turnhout: Brepols: 2021), 13–28, here 13; Christopher Tyerman, “Were There Any Crusades in the Twelfth Century?,” *The English Historical Review*, 110, no. 437 (1995), 553-577; E. O. Blake, “The Formation of the ‘Crusade Idea’”, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 21, no. 1 (1970), 11-31.

² Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana, History of the Journey to Jerusalem*, ed.& trans. Susan B. Edgington, *Oxford Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 50.

Lateran in 1215, in which he called for a new crusade, the Fifth Crusade (1217-21) against Egypt.³ The term “crusade” originates from the Latin *crociata*, which, according to Benjamin Weber’s findings, did not appear in Latin papal records until 1300. Even after this time, its occurrence in papal chancery registers remained scarce until the latter part of the fifteenth century, when its usage gradually became more prevalent.⁴ French terms like *croisade* and *croisés* appeared in the fourteenth century and German terms like *Kreuzzug* or *Creuzzug* in the late seventeenth century. In English, the terms “crusade” and “crusader” only found currency in the eighteenth century, subsequently serving as a legitimising discourse for European colonial movements.⁵

Medieval Muslim Arabic sources primarily referred to the invading Latin forces as the Franks. The crusading wars were termed *ḥurūb al-ifranj* or *ḥurūb al-firanjah* (wars of the Franks). The Crusaders were called *al-ṣalībiyyūn*, while the modern Arabic equivalent of the European term “Crusades” is *al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah*, the term that initially appeared in mid-nineteenth century Arab Muslim literature. Another term, *al-ṣalībīyāt* (the crusade campaigns), is primarily used by fundamentalist Islamists and is rarely employed by academics in the Arab world.⁶

³ Michael Markowski, “Crucesignatus: Its Origins and Early Usage”, *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 10 (1984), 157-165, here 157-158; Tyerman, “Were There Any Crusades in the Twelfth Century”, 568, 575.

⁴ Benjamin Weber, “When and Where did the Word ‘crusade’ appear in the Middle Ages? And Why?”, in *The Crusades: History and Memory. Proceedings of the Ninth Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, vol. 2, ed. Kurt V. Jensen and Torben K. Nielsen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 199–220; idem, *Lutter contre les Turcs. Les formes nouvelles de la croisade pontificale au XVe siècle* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2013), 509–517.

⁵ Christoph T. Maier, “From Kriuzvart to Kreuzzug German words for Crusade and their Usage from the 13th to the 18th Centuries”, in *Crusade: The Uses of a Word from the Middle Ages to the Present*, *Crusade: The Uses of a Word from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Benjamin Weber, *Crusades-Subsidia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2024), 14-17. Also in the same volume: Rosa Cetro, “Croisade(s) et dictionnaires français Une étude diachronique (XVIIe-XXe siècle)”, 83-69, and Carol Sweetenham, “Crucifixion, cross and crusade Crusading terminology in old French crusading chansons de geste”, 97-106, Tyerman, *The Debate on the Crusades*, 3-5, 141-152; König, “1412: Al-Qalqašandī”, 7.

⁶ Ahmed M. Sheir, “Between Peace and War: The Peaceful Memory of the Crusades between the Middle Ages and the Modern Arabic-Egyptian Writings”, in *Studies in Peace-Building History between East and West through the Middle Ages and Modern Era*,

The neglect of Arabic-Islamic sources of the crusading period is evident from the lack of translations and insufficient funding for research on the extensive Arabic and Islamic records from that period. The first significant attempt to translate these sources was in the *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Documents Orientaux*, but even this collection has received limited scholarly attention and is plagued by issues in both editing and translation.⁷ Another notable effort to present Arab sources was Francesco Gabrieli's work, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*. However, it was not fully satisfactory from an academic perspective, since it presented only selective texts and, originally written in Italian, its English translation lacks sufficient contextualisation.⁸

Further significant efforts to translate Arabic Islamic chronicles from the crusade period began with Hamilton Gibb's translation of Ibn al-Qalānisi's chronicle in 1932.⁹ This was followed by the translation of *The Book of the Jihad* by 'Alī b. Al-Sulamī, a work that gained substantial attention in western academia of the Crusades and Islamic studies. However, much of Al-Sulamī's book is lost, and only a few parts survive. Its significance lies more in its study of Jihad rather than in providing a historical analysis of the Crusades, as it offers little information on the events of the First Crusade. Al-Sulamī's work, the earliest surviving Muslim response to the Franks' arrival, primarily addressed his immediate audience and students in Damascus, to understand Jihad's principles and to reconcile with God for success against their enemies (the Franks).¹⁰ While the book did not directly represent an Arab-Islamic concept of the Crusades, it demonstrates that some Muslims in the late

eds. Aly Ahmed Elsayed, Abdallah Abdel-Ati al- Naggar, and Ahmed Sheir (Cairo: Sanabil Bookshop, 2019), 145–64, here 145-46; Abbès Zouache, "Écrire l'histoire des croisades, aujourd'hui, en Orient et en Occident", in *Construire la méditerranée, penser les transferts culturels*, eds. Rania Abdellatif, Yassir Benhima, Daniel König, and Elisabeth Ruchaud (München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2013), 120-47, here. 120.

⁷ *Recueil des Historiens des Croisades: Documents Orientaux*, 5 vols (Paris, 1872–1906).

⁸ Francesco Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969).

⁹ Hamilton Gibb, trans., *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades by Ibn al-Qalānisi* (London: Luzac, 1932), reprint, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002.

¹⁰ See Niall Christie, trans., *The Book of the Jihad of 'Ali Ibn Tahir al-Sulami (d. 1106): Text, Translation and Commentary* (London: Ashgate, 2015).

eleventh century had a distinct conceptual understanding of the challenges that faced Muslims under Frankish attack.¹¹

Some other translations of Arabic chronicles from the crusading period were later published.¹² However, many of these texts still need a more satisfactory translation to fully capture the specific terminology and the historical perspective of the Arab and Islamic viewpoints on the Crusades. This still requires greater scholarly attention and dedicated funding initiatives. Recent scholarship has primarily focused on examining the perception of the Crusades in modern and early modern European scholarship and societies.¹³ While some works have touched upon the Arab perspective, they often focus on medieval sources. Amin Maalouf, for instance, predominantly explores medieval sources rather than contemporary Arab perspectives on the Crusades.¹⁴ However, thanks are due to Moḥammad ‘Awaḍ who catalogued hundreds of scholarly titles on the

¹¹ Paul E. Chevedden, “The Islamic Interpretation of the Crusade: A New (Old) Paradigm for Understanding the Crusades”, *Der Islam* 83 (2006), 90–136.

¹² David Cook, trans., *Chronicles of Qalāwūn and His Son al-Ashraf Khalīl* (Abingdon: Routledge: 2020); D. S. Richards, trans. & ed., *The Chronicle of Ibn al-Athīr for the crusading period from al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, 3 vols. (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006-2008). Reprint, Abingdon: Routledge, 2016; Idem, *The Rare and Excellent History of Salādin*, or *al-Nawādir al-Sultāniyya wa al-Maḥāsīn al-Yūsufiyya* by Bahā’ al-Dīn ibn Shaddād (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); Malcolm Cameron Lyons, Ursula Lyons (trans.), Jonathan Riley-Smith (ed.) *Ayyubids, Mamlukes and Crusaders: Selections from the Tārīkh al-Duwal wa al-Mulūk of Ibn al-Furāt, Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm b. al-Furāt*, 2 vols (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1971).

¹³ For example, Megan Cassidy-Welch, ed., *Remembering the Crusades and Crusading. Remembering the Crusades and Crusading* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), idem, *War and Memory at the Time of the Fifth Crusade* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019); M. Cassidy-Welch, Anne Elisabeth Lester, eds. *Crusades and Memory: Rethinking Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015); idem, “Memory and Interpretation: New Approaches to the Study of the Crusades”, *Journal of Medieval History*, vol. 40 (2014), 225-236; Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Lucie Doležalová, *The Making of Memory in the Middle Ages. Later Medieval Europe 4* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

¹⁴ Amin Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, trans. John Rothschild (London: Alsaqi Books, 1984).

Crusades in his Arabic-language bibliographical work.¹⁵ It provides an invaluable survey of contemporary academic Arabic studies on the Crusades, and it is, for the first time, presented in an updated and revised English version in this volume.

In 1999, Carole Hillenbrand conducted an in-depth examination of twelfth and thirteenth-century Arab Muslim sources on the Crusades. She says, however, that the extensive topic of modern Islamic perspectives on the Crusades requires analysis across several volumes. In chapter eight, "The heritage of the Crusades," Hillenbrand sheds light on contemporary repercussions and the representation of Saladin (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn) within the narratives of certain religious and political factions, such as Ḥizb Allāh, Ḥamās, and al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (the Muslim Brotherhood).¹⁶ Likewise, in 2007, John Chamberlin, a naval captain, delved into ideological and politicised perspectives on the Crusades, focusing on the views of diverse Islamist groups.¹⁷

Reflecting on British imperialism and colonialism in the wider Middle East, including the Arab world, Riley-Smith examines how Enlightenment figures such as Voltaire, Hume, and Gibbon critically viewed the Crusades as irrational religious conflicts during the nineteenth century. He points out that scholars like Charles Mills continued to criticize the Crusades as fanaticism impeding societal progress. Influenced by Enlightenment principles, the writer of historical romances Sir Walter Scott portrayed Saladin as a contemporary, liberal European character.¹⁸ In contrast, Diana Abouali argues that Saladin's legacy, symbolically used in the Middle East for anti-colonial and anti-Zionist purposes, has enduring significance in Arab-Muslim culture. She challenges the misconception that the revival of his image was solely due to European influence, emphasizing his lasting presence despite western narratives that have attempted to sideline him.¹⁹

¹⁵ Moḥammad Mu'nis 'Awaḍ, *Fuṣūl Bibliūghrāfiyah fī Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Dār 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1996).

¹⁶ Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 589-614.

¹⁷ John M. Chamberlin, "Imagining Defeat: An Arabic Historiography of the Crusade", (MA. Thesis: University of the State of New York, Naval Postgraduate School Security Affairs, 2007), 33-60.

¹⁸ Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination, 8 November 1898–11 September 2001", *Crusades*, 2:1 (2003), 151-167.

¹⁹ Diana Abouali, "Saladin's Legacy in the Middle East before the Nineteenth Century", *Crusades* 10:1 (2011), 175-189.

To elucidate the distinct stages and complexities that have shaped the historiography of the Crusades in the West, Constable defines four key periods in crusading scholarship. The first period (1095 to the end of the sixteenth century) describes Muslims as a significant threat, emphasizing the defence of Christendom. In the second period (seventeenth to eighteenth centuries), historiographical analysis becomes more nuanced, influenced by confessional and rationalist perspectives. The third period (early nineteenth to mid-twentieth century) is characterized by a more rigorous, though still biased, scholarly approach, reflecting a transition from nineteenth-century admiration to twentieth-century criticism. The fourth period underscores a growing divide between scholarly interpretations and popular understandings, highlighting the complex and contested legacy of the Crusades in the contemporary western context.²⁰ Building on this perspective, a comprehensive examination of the Eastern Arab viewpoint on the Crusades—encompassing both historiographical scholarship and public discourse—is warranted, and the present volume is intended as a first step in meeting this need.

In the politicised and religious context of the modern memory of the Crusades, Umej Bhatia examines how contemporary Muslims perceive the Crusades, particularly emphasising the adoption and reinterpretation of the Crusades by Islamic ideological and political movements since the 1950s, with significant attention given to their association with Osama bin Laden. He also analyses how figures like Saladin and Osama bin Laden are remembered and invoked in religious discourse. Bhatia also delves into the role of historical perspectives and sociological theories, drawing on scholars such as Maurice Halbwachs²¹ and Jacques le Goff²² to explore collective memory formation. Additionally, he discusses the utilisation of the Crusades

²⁰ Giles Constable, *Crusaders and Crusading in the Twelfth Century* (Farnham & Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 5.

²¹ E.g., Maurice Halbwachs, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952); idem, *The collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books, 1980).

²² Jacques le Goff, *History and Memory*, trans., Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); idem, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans., Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

by radical groups in promoting anti-western sentiment and ideological mobilisation within the Muslim world.²³

In attempts to fill, but which equally highlight, the *lacunae* in the study of crusade historiography, Abbès Zouache has contributed a book chapter examining various approaches to crusade historiography in both Eastern and Western contexts, drawing attention to recent Arabic contributions. Nevertheless, Zouache emphasised that conducting a dedicated examination of Arab academic contributions to the Crusades necessitates a profound understanding of the history of Arab academia, fluency in the Arabic language, and extensive familiarity with Arabic crusade-related literature.²⁴

In 2018, Jonathan Phillips and Mike Horswell founded the *Engaging the Crusades Series*, which presents new studies on the memory of the Crusades. However, this series has primarily focused on western perspectives, with occasional references to Middle Eastern memories of the Crusades. In the first volume, Jonathan Phillips explores the Near Eastern memory of Saladin from 1880 to 1925, highlighting Kaiser Wilhelm II's 1898 visit to Damascus and his homage to Saladin during a visit to the latter's mausoleum, acknowledging Saladin's bravery, commitment to justice, and noble character.²⁵ In the third volume of the same series, the Egyptian scholar Taef El-Azhari gives two

²³ Umej Bhatia, *Forgetting Osama bin Munqidh, Remembering Osama bin Laden: The Crusades in Modern Muslim Memory*, RSIS Monograph no. 12 (Singapore: S. R. School of International Studies, 2008), 16–65.

²⁴ Zouache, "Écrire l'histoire des croisades", 121, 128-37.

²⁵ Jonathan Phillips, "'Unity! Unity between All the Inhabitants of Our Lands!': The Memory and Legacy of the Crusades and Saladin in the Near East, c. 1880 to c. 1925", in *Perceptions of the Crusades from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Mike Horswell and Jonathan Phillips, *Engaging the Crusades 1* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 79-106; Jonathan Phillips, "The Memory of Saladin and the Crusades in the Near East from the Fifteenth to the Late Nineteenth Centuries", in *The Crusades: History and Memory. Proceedings of the Ninth Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East*, Odense, 27 June - 1 July 2016, vol. 2. eds. Kurt Villads Jensen, Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen (Turnhout: Brepols: 2021), 29-53. An early version published in German under "Vor der orientreise Wilhelms II. Die Erinnerung an Saladin und die Kreuzzüge im Nahen Osten vom 15. bis zum 19. Jahrhundert", in *Kreuzzüge des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, ed. Felix Hinz (Hildesheim: Olms, 2015), 67–86.

pages of a brief image of the Crusades in Arab culture and media,²⁶ which he presented previously in a German article published in 2015.²⁷

In 2019, Phillips delved deeper into Saladin's memory in the East, as part of his book on *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin*,²⁸ emphasising his enduring legacy of reclaiming Jerusalem and resisting western powers, despite criticisms from some Shiites. He shows that contemporary examples, like Saladin used as a screensaver among Syrian refugees, illustrate widespread admiration of him. Phillips' analysis also centres on religious-nationalist discourses, broadly categorised as pan-Islamism, by figures like Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh, overlooking Arab historiography's perspectives on Saladin before and after history departments were established in Egypt and Arab universities by the mid-twentieth century.

Fadi Ragheb's chapter on "New Sources on the Memory of Saladin in Islamic History" provides an informative introduction and survey of Saladin's memory in Arabic sources from the late medieval and early modern Ottoman periods.²⁹ Focusing on historical writings from Egypt and Syria between the early sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries, the study highlights Saladin's lasting impact on Arab-Muslim historical chronicles of the early modern period. Ragheb also identifies a significant gap in references to the Crusades in Arabic sources from the early Ottoman period. This gap highlights the need for further research into the memory of the Crusades in the Arab world during the Ottoman era.³⁰

²⁶ Felix Hinz and Johannes Meyer-Hamme, eds. *Controversial Histories –Current Views on the Crusades*, Engaging the Crusades 3 (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 45-46.

²⁷ Taef El-Azhari, "Die Prägung zukünftiger Generationen durch das Bild der Kreuzzüge in der arabischen Kultur und Medienlandschaft", in *Kreuzzüge des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, ed. Felix Hinz (Hildesheim: Olms, 2015), 161-76.

²⁸ Jonathan Phillips, *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2019), 329-86.

²⁹ Fadi Ragheb, "New Sources on the Memory of Saladin in Islamic History: An Explorative Essay into the Arabic Chronicles of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period", in *The Political and Cultural History of the Kurds*, ed. Amir Harrak (New York: Peter Lang, 2022), 201-37.

³⁰ For most Arabic scholarship on Saladin see, Muḥammad Mu'nis 'Awaḍ, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī bayn al-Tārīkh wa al-Uṣṭūra* (Cairo: Dār 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2008); Idem, *Riḥlat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Cairo: Dār al-'Ālam al-'Arabī, 2012); Idem,

In a new investigation, Oleg Sokolov reveals how Arab intellectuals connected the Crusades to contemporary European-Muslim relations during the Arab National Renaissance (*al-nahḍa*) of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He analyses the roles of pan-Islamism, pan-Ottomanism, and Arab nationalism, and highlights various interpretations of the Crusades in Middle Eastern history. These include seeing the Crusades as punishment for the deviation of Muslims from their faith, a catalyst for western expansion, and a source of Middle Eastern fanaticism.³¹ This analysis underlines the sophisticated and multifaceted political and religious legacy of the Crusades, demanding a thorough exploration of historical writings on the Crusades in the Arab world.

This survey of the scholarship accentuates the fact that western academics' views on the concept of the Crusades in modern Arab scholarship and public discourse often suffer from significant gaps due to a lack of engagement with contemporary Arab scholarship, focusing instead on politicised perspectives. They frequently form conclusions about the Arabic-Islamic perspective of the Crusades based on European sources and scholarship, rather than thoroughly examining both modern Arabic scholarship and medieval Arab sources. Despite the existence of rich Arab historical works on the Crusades, these sources, along with the perspectives of modern scholars, remain largely unexplored in western academia.

Consequently, until the early twenty-first century, western scholarship generally held the view that Arab Muslim historians lacked a comprehensive understanding and conceptualization of the Crusades as a historical

Qālū ‘an Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Al-Ayyūbī (Cairo: Dār al-Karaz, 2013); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī Fāris ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah* (Ramallah: Dār al-Shaymā’, 2014); Idem, 100 Kitāb ‘an Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: ‘Arḍ wa Naqd (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-‘Arabīya, 2015); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī wa ‘Aṣruhu: Madkhal Bibliyūghrafī* (Ramallah: Dār al-Shaymā’, 2015); Idem, *Riḥlatī ma‘a Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: Qaṭarāt min Shallālāt al-Dhākīra* (Sharjah: Dā’irat al-Thaqāfa wa al-‘Ilām, 2017); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: Inkisārāt wa Intiṣārāt* (Damascus: Dār Ḥawrān 2020); Idem, *Min al-Tārīkh al-‘Ālamī li Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Sharjah: Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif wa al-‘Ilām, 2020); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī fī al-Mawsū‘āt al-‘Arabīya wa al-Gharbīya* (Damascus: Dār Ḥawrān, 2020); Idem, *Al-Tārīkh Imra‘a: Aḍwā’ alā ‘Aṣri Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Giza: Dār ‘Ābid li al-Nashr, 2023).

³¹ Oleg Sokolov, “The Crusades in the Arab Social and Political Discourse of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Crusades*, 22:1 (2023), 100-114.

phenomenon before the nineteenth century.³² In this context, one could argue that modern European scholarship has reached its conclusion about the Arabic-Islamic perspective on the Crusades primarily through Western research and sources, rather than thoroughly engaging with medieval and contemporary Arabic scholarship. This approach underscores a broader Eurocentric bias towards medieval Islamic history in general, and specifically in the context of the Crusades.

The present study examines how the Crusades were remembered and reinterpreted in the modern Arab world, focusing on nineteenth-century Egypt. It is the first part of a larger project on Egyptian and broader Arab views of the Crusades, tracing developments from the medieval era to the nineteenth century. The study also explores how Crusade historiography evolved in the early twentieth century, leading to the establishment of an Egyptian historical school on the Crusades after World War II.

Bonaparte's Invasion of Egypt in 1798 and Al-Jabartī's Memory of the Crusades

Ibn al-Furāt (d. 807/1405), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), and Ibn Iyās (d. 930/1524) are considered to be the most outstanding Arab historians of the late Middle Ages. The Turkish domination of the Arab world since the early sixteenth century made Constantinople the cultural capital of the Islamic World, overshadowing Cairo and the other Arab cities. This led to a historiographical decline in these regions until the intellectual renaissance of the nineteenth century, which produced new intellectual and historiographical movements, often imitating the fifteenth-century Islamic historiographical tradition, especially Ibn Khaldūn and Al-Maqrīzī.

Building upon their medieval Arab Muslim predecessors, the authors of post-fifteenth-century Arabic texts commonly referred to the crusading movement as *al-ḥurūb al-Ifranjah*, or *ḥurūb al-ifranj*. They provide an overview of the Crusades, highlighting the periods of Saladin and Baybars in Egypt and Syria. These sources are built upon earlier chronicles from the twelfth to

³² See, König, "1412: Al-Qalqaşandī," 7-8; Cl. Cahen, "Crusades", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition Online*, ed. P. Bearman, EI-2 English (Brill, 2012) doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1636; Francesco Gabrieli, "The Arabic Historiography of the Crusades", in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. Bernard Lewis and Peter M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 98–107.

the fifteenth centuries. Notable examples include the sixteenth-century work *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr* of Ibn Iyās, the seventeenth-century chronicle *al-Nuzha al-zahiyya fī dhikr wulāt Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira al-mu'izzīyya* of Ibn Abī al-Surūr, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab* by Ibn al-'Imād, and *Kitāb akhbār al-uwal*, a Sultan–Pasha chronicle of Egypt by al-Ishāqī.³³

Although no Arabic-Islamic historiographer used the European-Christian term “Crusades” before the nineteenth century, the Syriac Christian (Maronite) patriarch and historiographer Istifān al-Duwayhī (d. 1704) was the first to employ the term *al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīya* in his work *tārīkh al-azminah* (*History of the Ages*). He specifically titled the sixth chapter of his book “*Fī al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyya*”. While he primarily used medieval Arabic and Syriac terms such as *al-Firanjah*, he occasionally incorporated terms like *al-ṣalībīyyin* (the Crusaders) or *al-ṣalībī* (the crusade/crusader) in titles or subtitles to describe certain events during the Crusades.³⁴

Al-Duwayhī appears to have drawn upon Latin–Arabic translations circulating within Syriac Christian circles since the early modern period. Similar to his contemporary Arab Muslim historiographers, al-Duwayhī followed the traditional approach and chronology used by the medieval Christian Syriac historians like Ibn al-'Ibrī (Bar Hebraeus, d. 1286). It appears that al-Duwayhī borrowed the title of his book, *Tārīkh al-Azminah* (*History of the Times*), from Ibn al-'Ibrī's Syriac chronicle known as *Tārīkh al-Azminah*, which Ibn al-'Ibrī summarised in Arabic chronicle *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*.³⁵

Scholars paid little attention to Arabic historical writing from the late medieval and early modern Ottoman period, believing sources were scarce due to the so-called “period of decadence” under Ottoman rule. However, recent studies have shown that the Arabic historiography of that period is rich and varied. The earlier misconception arose because most works remained unpublished and in manuscript form throughout the twentieth century, limiting most historians' access and to and understanding of these sources. Scholarly interest in the Ottoman conquest of the Mamlūk state in the early sixteenth century also diverted attention from later works.

³³ See in detail, Ragheb, “New Sources on the Memory of Saladin”, 213-217.

³⁴ Istifān al-Duwayhī, *Tārīkh al-Azminah*, ed. Buṭrus Fahd (Beirut: Dār Laḥadd Khāṭir, 1982), 80, 95, 79.

³⁵ Abū al-Faraj b. al-'Ibrī, *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*, ed. Anṭūn Ṣāliḥānī (Beirut: Al-Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkiyya lil-ābā' al-Yasū'īyyīn, 1890).

Additionally, the shift towards social and economic history, supported by newly accessible archival documents, left Arabic chronicles underexplored.³⁶

Notably, in early modern Arab chronicles, the memory of the Crusades is closely associated with Saladin, a prominent figure in both Western and Islamic historical accounts. While Saladin's legacy is revered in medieval Europe and was lauded during the European Enlightenment, it remained largely overlooked in the Middle East until 1872, when Namık Kemal, a Turkish Muslim, authored Saladin's first known modern biography. The revival of Crusade history and memory in the nineteenth century coincided with the increasing influence of modern European empires in the Middle East, prompting the Arab and Islamic world to reconsider and engage with its historical narratives linked to these significant medieval events.³⁷

Early research focused on monumental works by figures such as 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Ḥasan al-Jabartī (1754–1825/1826), overshadowing investigations into other Arabic historians from the preceding two centuries. Al-Jabartī is considered the last and greatest historian of Ottoman Egypt. His chronicle, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār fī al-tarājim wa-al-akhbār*, is a key history of Egypt under French occupation. He provides a detailed account of the Egyptian political and sociocultural landscape and his work is a masterpiece of historical insight into Egypt. However, al-Jabartī is often seen more as a continuation of the medieval Islamic historical school rather than a pioneer of a new distinct nineteenth-century historiographical school.³⁸

While recounting the history of the Crusades, al-Jabartī highlighted the role of Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Zankī in battling the Franks and his efforts to defend Egypt against their invasions following the decline of the Fatimid Caliphate during the reign of al-Āḍid (d. 1171). This decline was exacerbated by the internal conflicts between his viziers, Shāwar and Dirghām, who sought the Franks' assistance. He also dedicated a substantial section of his chronicle to the reign of Saladin, highlighting the Ayyūbid period and its

³⁶ Ragheb, "New Sources on the Memory of Saladin", 206-210; Michael Winter, "Historiography in Arabic during the Ottoman Period", in *Arabic Literature in the Post-classical Period*, eds. Roger Allen and D.S. Richards, the Cambridge History of Arabic Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 171– 188.

³⁷ Ragheb, "New Sources on the Memory of Saladin", 203-05; Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, 591-93; Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 84-85.

³⁸ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Al-Mu'arrikhūn fī Miṣr fī al-Qarn al-Taṣī' 'Ashar* (Alexandria, Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyah, 2000), 4-5; Ragheb, "New Sources on the Memory of Saladin", 210-211.

critical role in Islamic history. Al-Jabartī meticulously detailed Saladin's ascent, his campaigns in Egypt alongside his uncle Shīrkūh, the overthrow of the Shī'ī Fatimids, and the re-establishment of the Sunnī 'Abbāsīd caliphate in Egypt. He also narrated Saladin's conquests in the Holy Land, where Saladin continued the Jihad against the Franks, reclaiming Jerusalem and the Levantine coast.³⁹ Al-Jabartī's representation of Saladin, in the context of crusading history, is framed within the larger context of Islamic history.⁴⁰

In his work *Mazhar al-taqdīs bi zawāl dawlat al-firansīs*, Al-Jabartī examined the profound hardships endured by Egypt and the various forms of misery and oppression its people faced, particularly with the arrival of the French infidels (i.e. the French campaign of Bonaparte), marking the beginning of a dreadful torment. He draws a parallel between these events and the Frankish and Tartar invasions, noting that the Tartars took control of numerous countries and brought down many royal states, yet Cairo frequently emerged victorious against them. He further connects the French under Bonaparte with the Franks of the fifth and seventh Crusades (1217-1221 and 1248-1252), who attacked Damietta, associating the contemporary French invasion with the medieval Crusades.⁴¹ He writes:

The Franks arrived in Egypt during the time of al-Kāmil [r. 1218-38], son of al-'Adil [r. 1200-18], and they took control of Damietta and destroyed it. He fought them for months until he drove them out (...) Then they returned during the reign of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn [1240-49] and took Damietta and advanced towards Fariskur. Al-Ṣāliḥ fought them for fourteen months, while he was ill and confined to the East, and he established the city known as al-Manṣūra. His illness worsened, and he died. His wife, Shajar al-Durr [May-July 1250], concealed his death and managed affairs until his son, Turān Shah [1249-50], arrived from Hasankeyf. The infidels [Franks] had already suffered a severe defeat before his

³⁹ 'Abd al-Raḥmān Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār fī al-Tarājīm wa al-Ākhhbār*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Raḥīm 'Abd al-Raḥīm, vol 1 (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1998), 24-25; idem, *Mazhar al-Taqdīs bi Zawāl Dawlat al-Firansīs*, ed., 'Abd al-Raḥīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Raḥīm (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah, 1998), 11-14.

⁴⁰ Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, vol 1, 25-26; Ragheb, "New Sources on the Memory of Saladin", 217.

⁴¹ Al-Jabartī, *Mazhar al-Taqdīs*, 9-14.

arrival, and their king [Louis IX] was captured. The Franks who were referred to were the French. They [Those] Franks were the firansīs [French] sect.⁴²

In his historical survey of the crusading period, al-Jabartī employed some other medieval Arabic-Islamic terms such as *kuffār* (infidels) to describe the Franks, highlighting the religious and emotional dimensions of the conflict. He also focused on Saladin's rise and his efforts in reviving *al-madhhab al-sunnī* (the Sunni doctrine) in Egypt and the decline of the Fatimids and their Shī'ī doctrine. While narrating Saladin's jihad efforts and victories over the Franks, he omitted any reference to al-Kamil's relationship with Frederick II (d. 1250) and the latter's control over Jerusalem, a topic that remained debated in both contemporary and subsequent medieval Muslim writings. Instead, he emphasized al-Kamil's endeavours in establishing various religious sites in Egypt like the Dome (*Qubbat*) of al-Shāfi'ī and the house (*dār*) of hadith, known as *al-Madrassa al-Kamālīya* (the Kamaliya School). He highlighted the deeds of Al-Kamil's son, Al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn, who purchased the Mamluks and raised them to defeat the Franks during the Seventh Crusade led by King Louis IX. Furthermore, he referred to the Mamluk rulers as the "Turkish kings", highlighting Baybar's governance in Egypt, his victories over the Tatars (Mongols) and the protection of Egypt and the Muslim world.⁴³

Moreover, al-Jabartī briefly mentioned the Crusade of Peter I of Cyprus (r. 1358-69) against Alexandria in Egypt, known as the Alexandrian Crusade, which occurred during the era of Sultan Al-Ashraf Sha'bān (r. 754-778 AH / 1363-1377 AD).

And in the days of this Al-Ashraf's era, the Franks advanced upon Alexandria while its defenders were off guard, plundering its wealth and capturing its women. The news reached Egypt (i.e. Cairo), Al-Ashraf thus prepared and marched with his soldiers, [and] he found that they had already departed from there and abandoned it. I came across a historical account in two volumes on this occurrence [Crusade], which states that the mother of the

⁴² Al-Jabartī, *Mazhar al-Taqdīs*, 13-14.

⁴³ Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, vol. 1, 24-30.

Frenchman who wears a ring in his ear originates from the women captured during this Crusade.⁴⁴

While Al-Jabartī's conceptualisation of the earlier Crusades expresses religious dimensions, his mention of the Alexandrian Crusade is relatively devoid of this aspect. Instead, it reveals the economic motivations referring to the plundering of the city. Furthermore, he alludes to the French who landed on the coast of Alexandria in July of 1798, and traces their lineage back to the women captured during the fourteenth century Alexandrian crusade, thereby making a connection between the events of the Crusades and his own time. It is also noteworthy that Napoleon himself invoked the memory of the Crusades at the beginning of his campaign against Egypt, although he also claimed that he had come to Egypt to create modern political and economic structures in the country.⁴⁵ When the French fleet landed on the Alexandria coast in July 1798, coming from Malta, Napoleon addressed a proclamation to the people and scholars of Alexandria, invoking the memory of the Crusades that al-Jabartī mentions as follows:

[..] O Egyptians, it has been said to you that I (Bonaparte) have come to this region with the intent to abolish your religion, but that is an obvious lie. Do not believe it and tell the denigrators that I have come to you only to liberate your rights from the hands of the oppressors, and that I, more than the Mamluks, worship Allah, the Almighty, and respect His Prophet and the Great Qur'an. [...], O sheikhs, judges, imams, and *al-jarbijjiyyah* (Janissary knights/officers) of the town (Alexandria), tell your people: the French are also sincere Muslims, and to prove this, they descended to Great Rome and devastated the seat of the Pope (the Papal See), who was always urging the Christians to fight Islam. Then, they went to the island of Malta and expelled the *al-kuwalīriyyah* knights (St. John knights), who claimed that God Almighty required them to fight the Muslims. [...].⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, vol. 1, 34.

⁴⁵ Franz Herre, *Napoleon Bonaparte. Eine Biographie* (München: Hugendubel, 2006), 57-64.

⁴⁶ Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, vol. 3, 5.

A historical parallel to the Crusades emerged during Napoleon's conquest of Malta and the subsequent Egyptian campaign, referred to by the French novelist Alexandre Dumas (d. 1870) as the Eighth Crusade.⁴⁷ Bonaparte's invasion revived the Egyptian memory of the Crusades, especially the First Crusade (1095–1099) called for by the French Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont in 1095 and the Seventh Crusade of King Louis IX (1248-1252).⁴⁸ The French contributed much to the Crusades and they were the first to represent their modern imperialist projects in crusading terms. France created a legendary national crusading history to be associated with its modern imperialist program but it was not the only European country which invented such propaganda.⁴⁹

While Al-Jabartī was an objective historian who praised the civilizational and scientific efforts of the scholars accompanying Napoleon,⁵⁰ his depiction of the Crusades became more prominent as a "living memory" in his writings. Utilising modern terms such as occupation and colonisation, he further described the French as infidels, echoing medieval Islamic terminology used to describe the Franks. He coined the term *al-Firansāwīyyah* (French) to refer to the French forces. Al-Jabartī's use of *Fransīs* to symbolise the French or their ruler is consistent with the traditional usage in Arabic Islamic sources for French kings, particularly during the Seventh Crusade. He rarely mentioned Napoleon Bonaparte by the name "Bonapartah." Additionally, he used *al-Ifranjah* not only to refer to the French or European forces but also to European merchants and residents in Egypt at that time. For instance, he referred to *al-tujjār al-ifranj* (the frankish merchants) and *jamī' al-Ifranj* (all Franks), indicating that Franks or Frankish had become synonymous with any European, particularly the French, in Egypt.⁵¹ This

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Siberry, "Crusading against France, 1789–1815," in *Crusade: The Uses of a Word from the Middle Ages to the Present*, ed. Benjamin Weber (Abingdon: Routledge: 2024), 107-119, here 112.

⁴⁸ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (London: Continuum, 2003), 13-57; Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Alan V. Murray, "The Army of Godfrey of Bouillon, 1096-1099: Structure and Dynamics of a Contingent on the First Crusade", *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire* 70: 2 (1992), 301–29.

⁴⁹ Riley-Smith, "Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination", 155-56.

⁵⁰ Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, vol.3, 179.

⁵¹ Al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-Āthār*, vol.1, 11, 540-41, 585-86; vol. 2, 124; vol. 3: 1-5, 9-10, 12, 14-16, 19, 47, 298, 512.

term continues to be used today, albeit in a broader context to refer to the Europeans and the West.

Al-Jabartī's historicization of the Crusades was characterised by a religious and emotional dimension, focusing less on the battles with the Franks and more on their broader impact. His chronicles underscore the era of Saladin as a pivotal chapter in Egyptian history, reflecting an Islamic perspective on the Crusades. The Ayyubids, prominent during this period, profoundly influenced Egyptian history, a legacy continuing through the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. Al-Jabartī's narrative reveals an emerging Arab-Islamic interpretation of the Crusades from the nineteenth century, drawing from medieval and crusader-era sources. Thus, the Arab-Islamic perception of the Crusades underwent historicization from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, marking a transitional phase. Al-Jabartī's work serves as a bridge between late medieval and modern understandings of this significant historical epoch. He extended the concepts found in medieval Arabic sources into the nineteenth century and beyond, bridging the gap between medieval understanding and modern memory. This was in parallel impacted by the contemporary rising imperial powers in Europe, which sought to expand their influence over Egypt and other regions across the globe.

According to Wajīh Kawtharānī, Al-Jabartī, inheriting a traditional juridical and historical culture shaped by Ibn Khaldun's ideas, navigates disorders on two fronts. Firstly, he confronts the challenge of established Islamic cultural images from the late Middle Ages, while exploring a comparative historical disruption that reveals disconnected rifts among global civilizations. Within globalisation, these cultures intertwine beyond Islamic geography, while Al-Jabartī tries to engage closely with unfolding events, oscillating between documenting factual changes as an intellectual historian and reacting as a jurist to social and cultural upheavals. Al-Jabartī's narrative begins by examining dynamic interactions between the West and Islam, emphasizing tensions and exchanges across the Mediterranean. This period sees clashes through the Christian Crusades and Islamic Jihad. This era introduces new interpretations of collective memory intertwined with views on Crusades and Jihad, expressed in modern terms. The "Eastern Question" in Western discourse becomes a mission of cultural

dissemination,⁵² while in the Islamic context, it encompasses fragmentation, occupations, the occupation of Palestine, and marginalisation. These developments surround enduring tragedies in collective memory, evoking upsetting historical recollections.⁵³

Rifā‘a Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and His Historiographical Memory of the Crusades

Rifā‘a Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801-1873) was a pivotal figure of the intellectual and cultural renaissance (*Nahḍah*) in nineteenth century Egypt. He was born in Ṭaḥṭā and educated at al-Azhar University in Cairo. He became the head of the Egyptian educational mission (1826-1830) sent by Egypt’s ruler, Muḥammad ‘Alī Pasha (r. 1805-1848) to Paris, where he mastered French and absorbed European culture. Upon returning to Egypt, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī played a crucial role in modernizing Egyptian education and intellectual thought. He established the School of Languages in Cairo and led a significant translation movement, bringing key European works in science, literature, and philosophy into Arabic, thereby fostering an intellectual renaissance in Egypt. His works emphasized education, rational thinking, and adopting beneficial western aspects while preserving Islamic values. Notable among his writings is *Takhlīṣ al-ibrīz fī talkhīṣ bārīz* (The extraction of gold in the summary of Paris), recording his observations of French society and offering insights into Egypt’s development. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī also authored and translated numerous other works, such as *Qalā‘id al-mafākhīr* and *Anwār tawfīq al-jalīl*. His efforts laid the groundwork for modern Arab thought and education reform, advocating a balanced modernization approach that embraced progress and cultural heritage.⁵⁴

Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī seems to have appropriated the term *crusade* from the French *la croisade* during his residency in Paris.⁵⁵ He employed the term Crusades in

⁵² On this see, Leslie Rogne Schumacher, “The Eastern Question as a Europe Question: Viewing the Ascent of ‘Europe’ through the Lens of Ottoman Decline”, *Journal of European Studies* 44.1 (2014): 64-80

⁵³ Waḥīh Kawtharānī, *Al-Dhākīrah wa al-Tārīkh fī al-Qarn al-‘ashrīn al-Ṭawīl: Dirāsāt fī al-Baḥṭh wa al-Baḥṭh al-Tārīkhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Ṭalī‘ah, 2000), 27, 39-41.

⁵⁴ Rifā‘ah al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Al-A‘māl al-Kāmilah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Imārah, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2010), 39-50; Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, *Rifā‘a Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī Za‘īm al-Nahḍa al-Fikrīya fī ‘asr Muḥammad ‘Alī*, (Windsor: Hindawi, 2017), 10-12; 33-46.

⁵⁵ Sheir, “Between Peace and War”, 156, Martin Cleveland, William L. Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (USA: Westview Press, 2013), 86.

his writing about modern civilization in Europe as an example of Europe's past and as a warning about what could become of Islamic civilization which had broken down. He expresses his view as follows:

“When the Crusades and the Frankish invasions in the eastern Islamic countries necessitated that the army leaders themselves travel to these wars, and they were the ones in charge, it required that they take from their resources as much money and men as they could for the sake of the war against Islam. They were zealous and religiously enthusiastic, and the times of invasion and fighting prolonged, to conquer the precious example of the holy Jerusalem, with the high expenditure due to prolonged conflict, and their insight in introducing the benefits of Eastern civilization into their western lands, learning from Islam what beautified their countries, and spending huge amounts of money to achieve all this for long periods, their economic conditions deteriorated, their money and men were lost over different times, and poverty afflicted them due to the necessity of wars, and they were unable to bear it. They were forced to sell lands and men, so the local people bought their properties and themselves with money. Some of them bought the privilege of appointing a sheikh [chief or a leader of a tribe] from the region to defend their civil rights, thus they enjoyed civil advantages and civil rights from that time, owned properties, emerged from subordination, and they, over time, increased in power in proportion to the weakening and loss of pride of those in charge. Everyone found freedom, and the European kingdoms became truly civilized and free.”⁵⁶

It seems here that al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, thus, was the first among the Egyptian scholars of the modern era who embraced the term *al-ḥurūb al-ṣalībīyah* in his works.⁵⁷ He acknowledged that the European campaigns against Islam

⁵⁶ Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, *Al-A'mal al-Kāmlah*, vol. 1, 668.

⁵⁷ Ḥusām 'Abd al-Zāhir, “Al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī fī Fikr Ruwād 'asr al-Nahḍa fī al-Qarn al-Tāsi' 'Ashar: Rifā'ah Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī Namūdhajān,” in *Bayn al-Tārīkh wa al-Siyāsa. Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh Miṣr wa al-'Ālam al-'Arabī*, ed. Aḥmad Z. al-Shalaq and Wā'il al-Dasūqī (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub wa al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah, 2019), 179-179, here 189; Sheir, “Between Peace and War”, 156.

during the Middle Ages, driven by fervent religious zeal and fanaticism, also contributed to the profound influence of Islamic civilization on Europe.

Although his writings carried religious emotion, typical of traditional Muslim historiography that highlights the significance of Jerusalem, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī intertwined this religious importance with nationalist and intellectual dimensions. Unlike all pre-modern Arabic-Islamic sources, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī spoke of the Crusades as a global phenomenon affecting both historical and contemporary European-Islamic relations. This approach illustrates that the Crusades are a vital part of global history, bridging the medieval Islamic and Latin periods with the nineteenth-century European and Islamic contexts. This connection embodies a “global historical memory” within the framework of modern contextualisation. Furthermore, his approach was largely objective, aiming to reconcile historical pride with benefiting from modern European advancements. Consequently, he consistently referred to the past to make the case that Egyptian and Arab-Islamic societies were ripe for the developments and reforms that were taking place in nineteenth-century Europe.

Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī recognised the significance of the humanities, and in particular history, as a central pillar of an intellectual renaissance, as evidenced by his statement: “We used to read a history book for two hours in the morning, before our Art and French classes, and every Friday we had three lessons in mathematics and engineering sciences.” Furthermore, his quest to learn new sciences was influenced by his religious upbringing as a graduate of al-Azhar.

Therefore, we perceive in his efforts, as mentioned, that he never finished reading a book in any field or art until he undertook its translation. He aimed to convey this new knowledge to the lands of Islam and its people, hoping to create a new renaissance that would lead them to become a civilization comparable to European Christian civilization in terms of intellectual achievement.⁵⁸

Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s mention of the Crusades came within the scope of his interest in studying, writing, and teaching history, focusing specifically on Egyptian history divided into two periods: pre-Islamic, starting from the ancient Egyptian era, and post-Islamic, continuing up to his time. Despite al-Ṭaḥṭāwī’s exposure to French culture, he also immersed himself in classical Arab-Islamic sources, developing his techniques of summarizing and citing from these sources. His historical writing thus blended rationally, merging

⁵⁸ Al-Shayyāl, *Rifā‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī Za‘īm al-Nahḍah*, 17-24.

Arab-Islamic tradition with an acknowledgement of the necessity of adopting European advances.⁵⁹

In this context, as a result of al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's continuous efforts in serving historical knowledge, history was officially recognised, for the first time, as a subject and a curriculum in schools. This is a matter that deserves attention and emphasises the pivotal role of al-Ṭaḥṭāwī in this regard. His role can be traced through three main directions: introducing historical lessons in schools, appointing teachers for them, and determining the textbooks to be taught. Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī first established a separate class for teaching geography and history as an adjunct to the *Madrasat al-Midfā'iya* (School of Artillery) which he referred to as a "school" in the introduction of his book *Al-Ta'rīfāt al-Shāfiya li-Murīd al-Jughrāfiya* (The Beneficial Explanations for the Study of Geography), first published in 1834. This class or school served as the first nucleus of *Madrasat al-ʿAlsun* (School of Languages), established in 1835, which also did not neglect the teaching of history. Subsequently, history was taught in preparatory schools, then in the School of Ancient Egyptian Language, and later in the School of *Dār al-'Ulūm* (House of Sciences, later College of Dār al-'Ulūm).⁶⁰

Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's intellectual contributions significantly enriched Egypt's cultural and academic landscape during the Arab Renaissance (*Nahḍa*) from 1860 to 1940. Thus, al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's works underscore the transformative power of historical memory in shaping intellectual aspirations within nineteenth-century Egypt and the Arab world. As a conclusion to the discussion on al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, the utilisation of the term "Crusades" in the nineteenth-century Arabic literary and historical works stemmed from the French-Arabic translation movement led by him.

This can also be traced in the works of two other important figures of the *Nahḍa* movement, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (d. 1897) and Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905), both of whom spent years in Paris. Al-Afghānī was born in As'adabād, in the Kabul region of Afghanistan, in 1254/1839, and he moved to Cairo after internal struggles in his homeland. Beginning in 1871, he taught philosophy, theology, and Sufism in Cairo becoming famous among students and causing concern for the British authorities. Khedive Tawfiq Pasha of Egypt ordered his exile, leading Al-Afghānī to move to India and then to

⁵⁹ 'Abd al-Zāhir, "Al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī fī Fikr Ruwād", 188, 192, 195-198.

⁶⁰ Al-Shayyāl, *Rifā'a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī Za'im al-Nahḍah*, 26-30; 'Abd al-Zāhir, "Al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī fī Fikr Ruwād 'Asr al-Nahḍah", 196-197.

Paris. Al-Afghānī also travelled to Iran and Istanbul, promoting reform until his death in Istanbul in 1897.⁶¹

In Paris, Al-Afghānī met with his friend Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh and they together founded the magazine *Al-Urwat al-Wūthqā* (The Firmest Bond). ‘Abduh was born in 1842 in Gharbiya in Egypt and received his early education in Tanta and later at al-Azhar University in Cairo. He became a close friend of Al-Afghānī, mastering various sciences and the French language. He was involved in the ‘Urābī Revolt (*al-thawrah al-‘urābīyah*). He warned against its repercussions and was subsequently exiled to Syria by the British. He later moved to Paris before returning to Egypt, where he was appointed judge and then Grand Mufti in 1899. He worked to reform al-Azhar, introducing modern sciences, thereby benefiting both Egypt and the wider Islamic world.⁶²

The Crusades were mentioned in al-Afghānī’s work *Al-Radd ‘alā al-Dahriyyīn* (a refutation of naturalists), translated from Persian to Arabic by Muḥammad ‘Abduh. The Crusades, alongside the Mongol invasion, were portrayed as events that profoundly shook the Muslim world. These disruptions were attributed to moral corruption and were ultimately resolved by returning to the core of Islamic morality. In his exploration of religious morals, ideals, pride, and honour, al-Afghānī delves into what can be termed “moral history”. He examines nations "that succumbed to humiliation and acquiesced to oppression," starting with the Greeks and then focusing on the Islamic nation.⁶³

Within this context, he attributed the attack of *aqzām al-ifranj* (a group of dwarf Franks) on Syrian lands to the moral decay he observed. This moral

⁶¹ His biography was written by Muḥammad ‘Abduh in the introduction to his Arabic translation of Al-Afghānī’s book *Al-Radd ‘alā al-Dahriyyīn*, see Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd ‘alā al-Dahriyyīn*, translated from Persian to Arabic by Muḥammad ‘Abduh (Miṣr, Al-Maktabah al-Maḥmūdīyah, 1935), 9-16; Jamāl al-Dīn Al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh, *al-‘Urwat al-Wūthqā*, ed. Saīd Hādī Khusrūshāhī, *Al-Āthār al-Kāmilah 1* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shrurūq al-Dawīyah, 2002), 60-67.

⁶² Zakī Fahmī, *Ṣafwat al-‘aṣr fī Tārīkh wa Rusūm Mashāhīr Rijāl Miṣr* (Miṣr: Maṭba‘at al-‘Iṭimād, 1926), 518-19; Mark Sedgwick, *Muḥammad Abduh, Makers of the Muslim World* (London: Oneworld, 2010), 16-19, 29-42; Andrew Hammond, “The Late Ottoman Intellectual Tradition: A Historiographical Review”, in *Late Ottoman Origins of Modern Islamic Thought: Turkish and Egyptian Thinkers on the Disruption of Islamic Knowledge*. Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022), 1-25.

⁶³ Al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd ‘alā al-Dahriyyīn*, 45-54.

decline, according to him, originated from the corruption of the *Bāṭiniyya* sect (esotericism), in Iran, which he believed tainted the morals of the Islamic community both in the East and West. Al-Afghānī highlights the Muslims' inability to defend against these Crusaders as part of a broader narrative of moral deterioration that was also caused by the Tatars. He then indicated that Muḥammadan (i.e. Islamic) virtue remained resilient among many Muslims, enabling them to rise, fight against the Franks and Tatars, and eventually expel them from Islamic lands.⁶⁴

In 1888, Muḥammad 'Abduh returned to Cairo and resumed his position at al-Azhar University. Like al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, he aimed for an intellectual and scientific revival, seeking to introduce Western ideas and educational systems to Egypt. Influenced by François Guizot's writings on European civilization, 'Abduh attributed Europe's progress during the Crusades to Arab-Muslim influence. By the early twentieth century, he highlighted the importance of Muslim cultural influence on Europe, viewing it as essential. He also believed that European influence could similarly benefit Muslim societies in the modern era. Although it is believed that 'Abduh borrowed the idea of the influence of Muslim civilization on Europe during the Crusades from Guizot,⁶⁵ these concepts were already present in earlier works by al-Ṭaḥṭāwī and indirectly in the writings of al-Jabartī. This suggests that al-Ṭaḥṭāwī initially influenced 'Abduh, who also followed in al-Ṭaḥṭāwī's footsteps by benefiting from and learning from the French education system.

It is crucial to clarify that 'Abduh's and Al-Afghānī's use of the term Franks in *Al-'Urwat al-Wūṭḥā* did not exclusively refer to medieval crusaders. Instead, beyond its historical context, the term also symbolised modern Europeans. They specifically referred to the British colonists and authorities in Egypt and Sudan as Franks, without any reference to the Crusades. They criticised the British for their prejudiced perceptions and misconceptions of the Islamic doctrine of predestination (*'aqīdat al-qaḍā' wa al-qadar*) that frequently led to the colonial portrayal of Muslims as backward or fatalistic. Another example is the general description of the British as Franks when discussing the resistance of Muḥammad Aḥmad, known as the Mahdi, in

⁶⁴ Al-Afghānī, *Al-Radd 'alā al-Dahriyyīn*, 53-54.

⁶⁵ Sokolov, "The Crusades in the Arab Social and Political Discourse", 104-105.

Sudan against the British occupation, and the consequent death of General Charles Gordon, the British Governor of Sudan, in 1885.⁶⁶

In addition, when discussing fanaticism, ‘Abduh and Al-Afghānī criticised European policies, particularly British alliances with *al-dahriyyīn* (naturalists), which they argued corrupted Muslims' faith and exacerbated internal divisions.

Indeed, we are most astonished by the behaviours of Westerners from the Frankish nations who exert great efforts to spread these ideas [fanaticism] among Easterners. They do not shy away from promoting religious fanaticism while accusing the fanatics of harshness. The Franks are the most zealous in this type of intolerance and the most committed to its causes.⁶⁷

In a broad context, this also aligns with the general culture in Egypt (and the Arab world), where a Western person is commonly referred to as *al-Ifranjī*, implying a foreigner, especially a European. This term was used not only for people but also for products, goods, and other items. However, in another clear example, European colonisation and intolerance were often connected with the crusading fanaticism of the past. They reflected on the religious zealotry among Europeans towards those of different religions.

Some can reach the highest levels of freedom, such as [William] Gladstone (the British statesman and liberal politician). However, you can discern the soul of Peter the Monk in his words. You may further find that they share the same spirit [of fanaticism].⁶⁸

In this context, Umej Bhatia argues that Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s comparison between modern Europeans and medieval Crusaders is anachronistic and lacks historical accuracy, suggesting that he was influenced by Al-Afghānī’s practice of referring to Europeans as Franks,

⁶⁶ Jamāl al-Dīn Al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh, *Al-‘Urwat al-Wūthqā*, ed. Saīd Hādī Khusrūshāhī, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Shurūq al-Dawliyah, 2002), 138, 140, 142, 402.

⁶⁷ Al-Afghānī and ‘Abduh, *al-‘Urwat al-Wūthqā*, 138.

⁶⁸ Al-Afghānī and ‘Abduh, *al-‘Urwat al-Wūthqā*, 138-39.

echoing medieval usage. He compares Crusaders and contemporary European colonialists, suggesting continuity in European aggression.⁶⁹

In a more systemic approach, Sokolov argues that while ‘Abduh initially likened Europeans to Franks, his views evolved to underscore the complexity of making sweeping generalisations. He did not always perceive them as identical to the Crusaders due to cultural shifts over time. His comparison of William Gladstone (d. 1898) to Peter the Hermit illustrates his evolving perspective on European influence.⁷⁰

By the end of the nineteenth century, Arab intellectuals’ memory of the Crusades had undergone gradual changes, with developments including other entangled influences and not only with the colonial West. Al-Afghānī blamed Muslim Sufis, while al-Kawākibī blamed the Turks. Later, Hasan al-Bannā integrated these views, criticising non-Arabs and Muslim Sufis for facilitating crusader victories. ‘Abduh, Al-Afghānī, and Mustafa Kāmil utilised the Crusades to explain contemporary Christian-Muslim conflicts, emphasising Muslim resilience and the necessity of Islamic unity against colonial powers. Alongside them, the Syrian ‘Abd al-Hamīd al-Zahrāwī (d. 1916) and Rafiq al-‘Azm (d. 1925) critiqued the Crusades as masking political and material ambitions, underscoring divisions within the Muslim community.⁷¹

In the Egyptian context, the memory of the Crusades was enduring and continuously revived, reflected in the historiographical movement from al-Jabartī and al-Ṭaḥṭāwī to ‘Abduh. They and others argued that Western powers pursued goals similar to the Crusades: economic and expansionist colonialism intertwined with religious bias. They viewed the implicit use of the Crusades as metaphorical of the expansive colonial movement, intensifying religious fanaticism rather than promoting liberation. Drawing on historical examples like the Crusades, they highlighted Muslim resilience against colonial powers, aiming to inspire contemporary resistance and revive Islamic identity as a unifying force against colonial narratives. They acknowledged modern European civilization and scientific advances, emphasising the need to learn from Europe’s transition from medieval darkness to modernity.

⁶⁹ Bhatia, *Forgetting Osama bin Munqidh*, 20

⁷⁰ Sokolov, “The Crusades in the Arab Social and Political Discourse”, 103-107.

⁷¹ Sokolov, “The Crusades in the Arab Social and Political Discourse”, 103-107.

First Egyptian Historiographical Account of the Crusades in 1899

At the end of the nineteenth and the start of the twentieth century, significant volumes of studies and editions of primary sources on the Crusades were published, as a natural reaction to the extension of the imperial powers in much of the non-western world, especially the Arab World. As Jonathan Phillips noted, "The Arab world began to try to shake off the shackles of Western imperialism; the struggles of their predecessors against the Crusaders seemed highly relevant, and this perception has continued." The increase in publications on the Crusades and the occupation of Arab lands contributed to reviving the memory of the Crusades, presenting them as "a much sharper and more vivid presence, largely because the events of the medieval period have several pertinent parallels to the present."⁷²

By the end of the nineteenth century, this longstanding memory and historiography of the Crusades was accomplished in the first dedicated Arabic book on crusading history. In 1899, the Egyptian Sayyid al-Ḥarīrī authored the first original Arabic history (untranslated) of the Crusades. He explained his motivation for writing the book: "Since Arab readers lack a comprehensive resource on the history of the Crusades to understand its truths, justifications, and consequences, I have written this book titled *Al-Akḥbār al-Sanīya fī al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*."⁷³

The book's publication coincided with Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany's visit to Syria, where he visited Saladin's mausoleum in Damascus in 1898. Wilhelm visited Istanbul, Palestine, and Syria to strengthen ties with the Ottoman Empire. Saladin's legacy thus served as a bridge between the Ottomans and their German patron, Kaiser Wilhelm II. Wilhelm praised Saladin, describing him as "one of the most chivalrous rulers in history and a knight without fear or blame."⁷⁴ While the visit primarily aimed to support the construction of the Berlin-Baghdad railway and further German-Ottoman interests in the region, it also stirred memories of the Crusades among Arabs. Jonathan Riley-Smith suggests that "Kaiser Wilhelm II reintroduced Saladin

⁷² Phillips, *The Crusades 1095-1197*, 2.

⁷³ Sayyid 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī, *Kitāb al-Akḥbār al-Sanīyah fī al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah* (Cairo: al-Zahrā' li al-I'lām al-'Arabī, 1985), 15. The first print of this book was in 1899. There is also a current edition in 2017 by Dār 'ain in Cairo, edited by Qāsim 'Abduh Qāsim.

⁷⁴ Phillips, "Unity! Unity between All the Inhabitants", 90; Riley-Smith, "Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination", 151-52.

to the Muslims in the Levant, who had been almost forgotten by them".⁷⁵ This is an exaggeration, for despite potential gaps in Arab collective memory relating to certain aspects of the Crusades, Saladin, as the idealistic Muslim leader, had not been forgotten.⁷⁶

In this regard, Al-Ḥarīrī's book appears to be a product of the late nineteenth-century revival of the Crusades' memory. The author portrays Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II (r. 1876-1909) as the protector of Muslims, fighting against a new crusading movement from Europe. This depiction links the contemporary struggle between Europe and the Ottoman Empire to the historical Crusades between Europe and Islam. This demonstrates that the Crusades were employed as a political propaganda tool in the conflict between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. However, Al-Ḥarīrī believed that Christianity was entirely innocent of the wars waged in its name. Al-Ḥarīrī's perspective is expressed as follows:

It is evident to any person the significance of the Crusades (*al-Hurūb al-Ṣalībīyah*) that took place in past generations, and the provocations of the popes and clergy (*al-Āklirūs*) for the people of Europe to fight the Muslims, and the Crusaders' occupation of the lands of the Levant (*Bilād al-Shām*) under the cause of liberating Jerusalem from Islamic control. And what followed this forms the unity of Muslims and the expulsion of the Crusaders from these lands, and the hardships, destruction, failures, and confusion that befell those crusaders. Now, as the kings of Europe show prejudice against our sublime state, may God protect it from what resembles the actions of those past generations. Our great Sultan 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-thānī, and magnificent Khan, safeguarded by the Seven Heavens (*al-Sab' al-Mathānī*) stated that Europe is now fighting against us a crusade war under a political form.⁷⁷

The history of the Crusades is presented in chronological order by al-Ḥarīrī, who began with the origins of the Crusades at the councils of Piacenza in Italy and Clermont in France in 1095.⁷⁸ He traces the history of the First

⁷⁵ El-Azhari, "Die Prägung Zukünftiger Generationen durch das Bild der Kreuzzüge", 170.

⁷⁶ Abouali, "Saladin's Legacy in the Middle East", 175-189.

⁷⁷ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Al-Akhbār al-Sanīyah*, 15.

⁷⁸ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Al-Akhbār al-Sanīyah*, 19-20.

Crusade and subsequent campaigns, culminating with the fall of Acre and its conquest in 1291 by the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl ibn Qalawūn (r. 1290-93). Al-Ḥarīrī's methodology was notably influenced by medieval Muslim sources, evident also in al-Jabartī's work, yet he achieved a more comprehensive and balanced account of the Crusades, incorporating events from both the European and Muslim worlds of the time.

This approach represented a significant shift in Crusades historiography, as al-Ḥarīrī incorporated European and Arabic terms such as Crusades, Crusaders, or Frankish wars, and Franks, blending Latin and Arabic terminology. His narrative intertwines battles viewed from both Latin and Muslim angles, presenting the Crusades as a narrative sourced from medieval Muslim perspectives while also incorporating Latin viewpoints. Al-Ḥarīrī's thorough description of events, particularly the capture and recapture of cities and fortresses by Muslims during the Crusades,⁷⁹ exemplified a pioneering approach in Egyptian and Arab historiography at the end of the nineteenth century.

Al-Ḥarīrī precisely detailed crusader figures, leaders, princes, and kings of Jerusalem, often using pronunciations reminiscent of their Latin or Old French forms; for instance, he referred to Richard the Lionheart as "Rīkārdūs", close to the Latin "Richardus". He also mentioned the kings of France, Germany, and England, alongside other European leaders, and discussed their encounters, relations, or conflicts with Byzantine emperors and the papacy during the Crusades. Further, in a distinctive bilingual approach, he transliterated European city names into their original and Arabic languages. For instance, he referred to Sicily as *Suqālīyah* during earlier Crusades, but later he used *Sīsīlīyā*, which closely approximates *Sicilia*.⁸⁰

Meanwhile, he provided an in-depth presentation of the broader dynamics within the Muslim world, encompassing the Fatimids, Abbasids, Seljuks, Zankids, Nur al-Din, Saladin, and the Ayyubids, as well as their relations with Franks, Byzantines, Armenians, and later Mongols. In this vein, Al-Ḥarīrī was the first to systematically categorize each crusade numerically, setting a precedent followed by subsequent historiographical works in Egypt and the Arab world. He assigned equal attention to Fatimid, Abbasid, Zengid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk histories during the Crusades,

⁷⁹ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Al-Akhhbār al-Sanīyah*, 50, 58, 67, 111, 127, 178, 180, 197-201.

⁸⁰ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Al-Akhhbār al-Sanīyah*, 53, 55, 66, 81, 85, 95, 218, 221, 270, 273, 279, 283, 286, 343, etc.

accentuating his Egyptian national identity by exploring Egyptian history in this period. In the meantime, Al-Hariri's work symbolises a synthesis of Crusades history into a global medieval narrative, reflecting the interconnectedness of world history at the time.

This book by Al-Ḥarīrī served as a primary source for crusade history until the establishment of the Egyptian historical school in universities during the latter half of the twentieth century. It maintained its significance and was reprinted as a cornerstone of Islamic historiography on the Crusades. Its publication was considered a significant deed. In the introduction to the book's 1985 edition, funded by the Egyptian Islamic Faisal Bank, it stated:

This book was the first Arabic-language work to compose the history of the Crusades from their beginning to their end, covering events spanning two centuries. It chronicles eight consecutive campaigns [considering Louis IX's crusade on Tunis as the eighth crusade] waged in the name of Christianity and the Cross, despite Christianity's disavowal of them... Today, as in the past, our Islamic world suffers from both crusader plunder and Zionist aggression... We present this book to Muslims as a glimmer of hope for a future in which the glories of Islam and Muslims may return.⁸¹

This presentation marks a crucial moment in crusade historiography within the Arab-Islamic world, linking the time of the book's first publication with the circumstances of Muslims and Arabs in the 1980s. This perspective situates the Crusades within a contemporary historiographical framework while emphasising their lasting collective cultural and political impact on Arab memory and collective consciousness. This influence gained renewed prominence in the early twentieth century, notably due to colonial expansions, World War II, the Palestine issue from the pre-Balfour Declaration in 1917 to the establishment of Israel in 1948, and subsequent Arab-Israeli conflicts. The idea of the crusade was instrumentalised as a nationalist instrument against colonial powers in the Arab world, particularly from the early twentieth century onward.

⁸¹ Al-Ḥarīrī, *Al-Akhbār al-Sanīyah*, 9-8.

Mustafā Kāmil (d. 1908), an Egyptian lawyer, journalist, nationalist and the founder of the idea of establishing the Egyptian University,⁸² revived the memory of the Crusades to illustrate the Ottoman-British struggle over Jerusalem and Palestine. He emphasised the implications of British ambitions for Jerusalem under Protestant authority and questioned the reaction of the Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims who historically defended the city. Kāmil linked past resistance to future liberation efforts, asserting Jerusalem's significance as an Islamic city transcending sectarian boundaries. He warned against wresting Jerusalem from the Ottoman Empire, foreseeing catastrophic consequences for global stability.⁸³

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 intensified comparisons between Zionism, British imperialism, and the Crusades. During World War I, the British censored references to the conflict as a modern crusade, yet British media portrayed the Crusades through paintings and cartoons.⁸⁴ The modern Zionist occupation of Jerusalem has been likened to the medieval crusader conquest, with historians drawing parallels between the crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem and Israel.⁸⁵ This association persisted through the Arab-Israeli conflict, underscored during the presidency of Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir (r. 1956-70) in Egypt. Nāṣir portrayed Western military actions, like the Suez Invasion, as contemporary Crusades, invoking historical parallels to rally Arab unity against foreign aggression.⁸⁶ The legacy of the Crusades continues to resonate in discussions about Jerusalem and Arab-Israeli relations, shaping not only contemporary Arab perceptions and political discourse but also the historiographical narratives.

In these developments, the Egyptian and broader Arab historical scholarship on the Crusades began with initial writings and gained academic prominence following the establishment of Cairo University in 1908. The

⁸² See: 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Rāfi'ī, *Mustafā Kāmil Bā'ith al-Harakat al-Waṭanīyah* (Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 5th ed, 1984), 9-11; Arthur Goldschmidt Jr, *Biographical Dictionary of Modern Egypt* (USA-Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub, 2000), 101-103.

⁸³ 'Alī Fahmī Kāmil, *Sīrat Mustafā Kāmil fī Arb'ah wa-Thalāthīn Rabī'an*, vol.3 (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Difā' al-Waṭanī, 1926), 179, 181.

⁸⁴ Thomas Asbridge, *The Crusades: The War for the Holy land* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2012), 480; El-Azhari, "Die Prägung Zukünftiger Generationen," 165.

⁸⁵ Oleg Sokolov, "Facing the Franks Again: The Crusades in Arab Social and Political Thought (1914–48)", *Die Welt des Islams* (2023), 1-29, here 15; Phillips, "'Unity! Unity between All the Inhabitants'", 93-94, idem, *The Crusades 1095-1197*, 3.

⁸⁶ Mūflih 'Alī, *Abṭāl al-Waḥdah al-Sūrīyah wa-al-Miṣrīyah fī al-Hūrūb al-Ṣalībīyah*, vol.1 (Damascus, 1958), 13-14; Maalouf, *The Crusades through Arab Eyes*, 13-14, 265.

field expanded significantly post-World War II with the spread of history departments in Egyptian universities. This growth coincided with the nationalist ideals advocated by ‘Abd al-Nāṣir and the surge of anti-colonial movements across the Arab world. The lasting impact and memory of the Crusades became increasingly evident in academic historiography, resulting in numerous scholarly works examining the Crusades from various perspectives. This ongoing project aims to provide an in-depth investigation of the academic and collective cultural memory of the Crusades in Egypt and the Arab world during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Conclusion

This study examines how nineteenth-century Egyptian historiographical memory perceived the Crusades, spanning analysis from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. It comprehensively explores both historiographical and intellectual aspects, investigating their impact within the context of colonialism and decolonization in Egypt. Central to this examination are the writings of al-Jabartī and al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, pivotal figures whose works bridged the traditional Arabic Islamic historiography of the late medieval period with emerging Arab national perspectives on the Crusades. This intellectual trajectory culminated in the 1899 publication of the first Arabic book on the Crusades by al-Ḥarīrī.

Furthermore, the contributions of ‘Abduh and Al-Afghānī were instrumental in Egypt’s Nahḍa movement, addressing intellectual and nationalistic concerns alongside anti-colonial objectives. Their writings on the Crusades and other historical events aimed at societal reform, fostering national identity and unity. Drawing on Islamic principles and historical narratives, they aimed to counter internal stagnation and resist colonial interference, advocating for modernization in education, law, and sociocultural norms. Their efforts laid the groundwork for subsequent historical and national movements that emphasized the significance of historical memory in contemporary anti-colonial and national struggles.

Karl Marx’s early writings characterized oriental societies as static and devoid of class consciousness, a perspective he later revised after 1881. This shift was influenced by a growing body of original studies coinciding with the expanding influence of colonial powers in the East, notably the British presence in Egypt. Marx came to acknowledge that modes of production could develop at varying speeds and take different forms, influenced by both external circumstances and internal structural elements within each mode of

production.⁸⁷ This adjustment mirrors the environment in which the Crusades were remembered and interpreted, by Al-Jabartī, Al-Ṭaḥṭāwī, ‘Abduh, Al-Āfghānī and Al-Ḥarīrī, shaped by both internal national dynamics and external colonial influences. The examination reveals that the memory and historical interpretation of the Crusades were deeply intertwined with broader intellectual, social, and economic contexts of nineteenth-century Egypt.

Therefore, the nineteenth-century Arabic scholarship on the Crusades marked a turning point between idealism and innovation. It merged the traditional Islamic presentation of history chronologically with new analyses that are particularly linked with national discourse, such as intellectual revival and decolonising efforts. The historiographical examination of the Crusades and European-Muslim relations evolved significantly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly after World War I and the rise of nationalism and anti-colonialism that further shaped historical discourse. This also influenced a new generation of Egyptian historians whose work had a profound impact on Arab historiography, paving the way for future research. This ongoing evolution underscores how Egyptian writings on the Crusades reflect shifting perspectives on medieval crusading and Jihad movements, challenging European views that dismiss modern Arab historiography’s grasp of crusade history.

⁸⁷ Amar S. Baadj, “Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl and his Historical-Materialist Approach to the History of the Medieval Islamic World”, *What’s Left of Marxism. Historiography and the Possibilities of Thinking with Marxian Themes and Concepts*, eds. Benjamin Zachariah, Lutz Raphael and Brigitta Bernet (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 156.

A SURVEY OF THE ARAB CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE CRUSADES (1899-2023)

MOHAMED MONES AWAD*

Abstract

This study examines Arab contributions to Crusade studies from 1899 to 2023, focusing on key scholars, institutional developments, and the translation of European sources. Beginning with Sayyid 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī's pioneering work, it explores the contributions of Egyptian, Iraqi, Syrian, and other Arab historians in shaping the field. Despite significant advancements, Arab Crusade studies remain underrecognized internationally and lack scholarly coordination. The study provides a bibliographical survey of major published works (and occasionally unpublished theses) in the Arab world, offering a foundation for dialogue with Western scholars who may have limited familiarity with Arabic contributions to Crusade historiography. This chapter serves as a guide, directing researchers to relevant books and recent studies that can bridge this gap in academic discourse.

Introduction

The Crusading Wars broke out following the call of Pope Urban II (1089-1099) at the Council of Clermont in France on the twenty-seventh of November in 1095. The Crusades represented the foreign policy of the Papacy and they were equivalent to the world war of the medieval period. The invaders succeeded in establishing principalities in Edessa, Antioch, and Tripoli along with the Kingdom of Jerusalem. Naturally modern Arab historians have

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devoted great attention to studying this movement, given its prominence in the story of East-West relations.

The Egyptian historians pioneered the study of the Crusades. Sayyid ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī published the first edition of his ground-breaking book *The Splendid Annals of the History of the Crusading Wars* in 1899.¹ He wrote this book in the aftermath of the failure of the ‘Urābī Rebellion and the occupation of Egypt by the British in 1882, an event which clearly displayed the European desire for colonial possessions in the East. Though the author was an amateur historian rather than an academic, he nonetheless earned the distinction of being the first modern historian of the Crusades in the Arab World.

Crusade Studies in Cairo University

Muṣṭafā Ziyāda (1900 – 1968) established the first Arab “school” of Crusade Studies in the Faculty of Letters at Cairo University, following his return from study in Liverpool. In 1961 he published a book on *The Campaign of Louis IX against Egypt and his Defeat at Mansura*.² This work appeared five years after the Tripartite Aggression of Israel, France, and Britain against Egypt following the nationalization of the Suez Canal, a time when there was increased interest among Egyptians in the history of East-West relations.

Ziyāda supervised the dissertations of several students who would play a role in Crusade studies including Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr, Ḥasan Ḥabashī, and Naẓīr Ḥassān Sa‘dāwī. ‘Āshūr wrote his MA dissertation on “Cyprus and the Crusades” which was published in Cairo in 1957. Ḥasan Ḥabashī wrote an MA thesis entitled “Nūr al-Dīn, the Crusaders, and the Islamic Awakening of the Sixth Century A.H.”, a pioneering study on Nūr al-Dīn Zankī which he published in 1949.³ He also played a prominent role in translating into Arabic the European primary sources for the Crusades including the anonymous *Deeds of the Franks and the Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (Cairo, 1958), Joinville’s *Life of St. Louis* (Cairo, 1968), William of Tyre’s *History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea* (4 vols. Cairo, 1991-1994), Villehardouin’s *The Conquest of Constantinople* (Jedda, 1402 A.H./1981-1982 A.D.), the anonymous *Crusade and Death of*

¹ Sayyid ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī, *Al-Akhhbār al-Sanīya fi Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba‘a al-‘Umūmīya, 1899).

² Muṣṭafā Ziyāda, *Ḥamlat Lūwīs al-Tāsi‘ alā Miṣr wa Hazīmatuhu fi Manṣūra* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-A‘lā li Ri‘āyat al-Funūn wa al-‘Ulūm al-Ijtimā‘īya, 1961).

³ Ḥasan Ḥabashī, *Nūr al-Dīn wa al-Ṣalībīyūn: Ḥarakat al-Ifāqa al-Islāmīya fi al-Qarn al-Sādīs al-Hijrī* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1949).

Richard III (Cairo, 2000), and the anonymous *Continuation of William of Tyre* (Cairo, 2002).⁴

Sa‘dāwī wrote a thesis entitled “A Military History of Egypt during the Time of Saladin” which was published in Cairo in 1958.⁵ He went on to write a number of other works on the Crusades such as *Five Contemporaries of Saladin* (Cairo 1957), *Three Historians of the Crusades* (Cairo, 1957), *The Army of Egypt in the Time of Saladin* (Cairo, 1959), *Contemporary Historians of Saladin* (Cairo, 1960), and *War and Peace in the Time of the Crusader Invasions* (Cairo, 1961).⁶ Sa‘dāwī built a reputation as a military historian of the Crusades, and his works have preserved their value and relevance despite their age.

There is no doubt that ‘Āshūr played the greatest role in establishing and developing the field of Crusade studies in Egypt and the wider Arab World. His chief work, which appeared in Cairo in 1963 in two large volumes, is entitled *The Crusader Movement: A Radiant Page in the History of Arab Jihād in the Middle Ages*, later more accurately renamed as *The Crusader Movement: A Radiant Page in the History of Islamic Jihād in the Middle Ages*.⁷ This was an unprecedented, pioneering study which examined the motivations of the Crusaders and the political development of the Muslim-Crusader struggle. He also wrote studies on two of the most prominent leaders of the Islamic

⁴ Ḥasan Ḥabashī, *A ‘māl al-Franja wa Hujjāj Bayt al-Maqdis* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1958); Idem, *Mudhakkirāt Joinville: Al-Qiddīs Lūwīs Ḥayātuhu wa Ḥamlātuhu ‘alā Miṣr wa al-Shām* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1969); Idem, *Wilyam al-Ṣūrī: Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-‘Āmma al-Miṣrīya li al-Kitāb, 1991-1994); Idem, *Mudhakkirāt Villehardouin: Faṭḥ al-Qusṭanṭīniya* (Jedda: Al-Majlis al-‘Ilmī, 1402 A.H.); Idem, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya al-Thālitha: Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn wa Rītshārd*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-‘Āmma al-Miṣrīya li al-Kitāb, 1999); Idem, *Dhayl Wilyam al-Ṣūrī* (Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-Miṣrīya al-‘Āmma li al-Kitāb, 2000).

⁵ Naẓīr Ḥassān Sa‘dāwī, *Al-Tārīkh al-Miṣrī al-Ḥarbī fī ‘Aṣr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1958).

⁶ Naẓīr Ḥassān Sa‘dāwī, *Khamsa min Mu‘āṣirī Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1957); Idem, *Thalātha min Mu‘arrikhī al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1957); Idem, *Jaysh Miṣr fī ‘Ahd Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1959); Idem, *Al-Mu‘arrikhūn al-Mu‘āṣirūn li Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1960); Idem, *Al-Ḥarb wa al-Salām Zaman al-‘Udwan al-Ṣalībī* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣrīya, 1961).

⁷ Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr, *Al-Ḥaraka al-Ṣalībīya: Ṣafḥa Mushriqa fī Tārīkh al-Jihād al-‘Arabī fī al-‘Uṣūr al-Wustā*, 2 vols. (Cairo: Al-Maktaba al-Anglo-Miṣrīya, 1963).

resistance to the Crusaders: *Al-Zāhir Baybars* (Cairo, 1963), and *Al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (Cairo, 1964).⁸

‘Āshūr supervised a number of students who themselves contributed significantly to the study of the history of the Crusades, including ‘Āliya al-Janzūrī (1941-2003), ‘Afāf Ṣabra, Qāsim ‘Abduh Qāsim (1942-2021), Zubayda ‘Aṭā’, Maḥmūd al-Ḥuwayrī (1932-2003), Aḥmad Ramaḍān Aḥmad (1941-2011), and Muḥammad Muḥammad Mursī al-Shaykh. They all became prominent professors and established their own “school” of medieval historians.

Al-Janzūrī wrote her thesis on the Crusader Principality of Edessa under the joint supervision of ‘Āshūr and the famous Egyptian medievalist Sayyida Ismā‘īl Kāshif, publishing it in Cairo in 1986.⁹ This is a truly exceptional study of which we can say without exaggeration that it is superior to anything published in English, French, or German on the same subject. She in turn supervised the dissertations of several distinguished historians such as Suhayr Malījī who wrote her doctoral thesis on “Crusader Women from 1098 to 1268”, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Alī who wrote his MA thesis on “The Crusader Castles in Syria: 1098-1191” and his doctoral thesis on “The Syrian Countryside during the Crusades”, and Surūr ‘Abd al-Mun‘im who wrote a doctoral thesis on “The Internal and External Politics of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem during the Reign of King Fulk of Anjou (1131-1143 A.D.)”.¹⁰

‘Afāf Ṣabra wrote her doctoral dissertation on “Venetian Relations with Egypt and Syria from 1100 to 1400 A.D.” and published it in Cairo in 1983.¹¹ She also published a volume of studies on the history of the Crusades in 1985,

⁸ Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr, *Al-Zāhir Baybars* (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1963); Idem, *Al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, (Cairo: Wizārat al-Thaqāfa wa al-Irshād al-Qawmī, 1965).

⁹ ‘Āliya al-Janzūrī, *Imārat al-Ruhā al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-‘Āmma al-Miṣrīya li al-Kitāb, 1986).

¹⁰ Suhayr Malījī, “Al-Mar’a al-Ṣalībīya min ‘Āmm 1098 ilā 1268 m.” (PhD Thesis, ‘Ayn Shams Univ., 2022); Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Alī, “Al-Qilā‘ al-Ṣalībīya fi Bilād al-Shām min ‘Āmm 1098 ilā 1191 m.” (MA thesis, ‘Ayn Shams Univ., 2002); Idem, “Al-Rīf al-Shāmī ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya” (PhD thesis, ‘Ayn Shams Univ., 2007); Surūr ‘Abd al-Mun‘im, “Al-Siyāsa al-Dākhiliya wa al-Khārijīya li Mamlakat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Ṣalībīya fi ‘Ahd al-Malik Fūlk of Anjou (1131-1143m.)” (PhD thesis, ‘Ayn Shams Univ. 2001).

¹¹ ‘Afāf Ṣabra, *Alāqat al-Bunduqīya bi Miṣr wa al-Shām min 1100 ilā 1400 m.* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabīya, 1983).

as well as two articles on the Crusades in the Saudi journal *Al-Dāra*.¹² The first of these articles concerns the amīr of Mosul Sharaf al-Dīn Mawdūd b. Altun-Tekin (1109 - 1113) and his role in resisting the Crusaders; it was published in 1986. The second is entitled “Bahā’ al-Dīn Qarāqūsh: the Slandered Vizier” and it appeared in 1987. Şabra is a professor of medieval history at Al-Azhar University where she has overseen numerous dissertations.

Qāsim ‘Abduh Qāsim is considered the foremost pupil of ‘Āshūr in the field of Crusade studies even though both his MA and PhD theses concerned Mamluk history strictly speaking. His MA dissertation was about the perception of the Nile in Egypt during the Mamluk period, while his doctoral thesis dealt with the Christians and Jews in Egypt during the same period. Later, he focused more on the history of the Crusades, a field in which he excelled. We can understand his prominent role in Crusade studies through an overview of his publications. His monographs on the Crusades include *The Israeli View of the Crusades* (Cairo, 1983), *The Ideological Background of the Crusades: A Study on the First Crusade* (Cairo, 1983), *The Nature of the Crusades* (Kuwait, 1990), and *The Zionist Reading of History: The Crusades as a Case-Study* (Cairo, 2005).¹³ Qāsim’s many articles on the Crusades include “The Image of the Crusader Warrior in the Arabic Sources” (1980), “The Social Causes of the Crusading Movement” (1983), and “The Crusades in the Thousand and One Nights” (1987).¹⁴ He has also translated into Arabic some of the European primary sources such as Fulcher of Chartres’ chronicle which he published under the title *The Crusader Colonization of Palestine* (Kuwait, 1988) as well as

¹² ‘Afāf Şabra, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Şalībīya* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Jāmi‘ī, 1985); Idem, “Mawdūd b. Altūn Takīn wa Dawruhu fī Ḥarakat al-Jihād al-Islāmī”, *Al-Dāra*, vol. 12, no. 2 (1986), pp. 109-138; Idem, “Bahā’ al-Dīn Qarāqūsh al-Wazīr al-Muftarā ‘alayhi”, *Al-Dāra*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1987), pp. 136-181.

¹³ Qāsim ‘Abduh Qāsim, *Ru’ya Isrā’īliya li al-Ḥurūb al-Şalībīya* (Cairo: Dār al-Mawqif al-‘Arabī li al-Şahhāfa wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī’, 1983); Idem, *Al-Khalfiya al-Īdiyūlūjīya li al-Ḥurūb al-Şalībīya: Dirāsa ‘an al-Ḥamla al-Ūllā* (Cairo: ‘Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1999); Idem, *Māhiyat al-Ḥurūb al-Şalībīya* (Kuwait: Al-Majlis al-Waṭanī li al-Thaqāfa wa al-Funūn wa al-Ādāb, 1990); Idem, *Al-Qirā’a al-Sahyūniya li al-Tārīkh: Al-Ḥurūb al-Şalībīya Anmūdhanjan* (Cairo: Dar al-Hilāl, 2005).

¹⁴ Qāsim ‘Abduh Qāsim, “Şūrat al-Muqātil al-Şalībī fī al-Maṣādir al-Tārīkhīya al-‘Arabīya”, *Al-Majalla al-Tārīkhīya al-Miṣrīya*, no. 27 (1980), pp. 9-38; Idem, “Al-Dawāfi’ al-ljtimā’īya fī al-Ḥaraka al-Şalībīya”, in *Nadwat al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī al-Wasīṭ*, vol. 2, eds. Qāsim ‘Abduh Qāsim and Ra’fat ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1983), pp. 187-234; Idem, “Al-Ru’ya al-Sha’bīya li al-Ḥurūb al-Şalībīya fī Alf Layla wa Layla”, *Majallat al-Ma’thūrāt al-Sha’bīya* (Qatar), vol. 2, no. 6 (1987), pp. 86-101.

modern Western studies on the Crusades, including Joshua Prawer's *The World of the Crusaders* (with Muḥammad Khalīfa, Cairo, 1999), and Jonathan Riley-Smith's *The Oxford History of the Crusades* (two volumes, Cairo, 2006).¹⁵

Qāsim supervised the doctoral dissertations of a number of medievalists who specialize in the history of the Crusades. 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Bannā wrote a doctoral thesis which he published as *The Markets of Bilād al-Shām during the Crusades* (Cairo, 2007).¹⁶ Ḥātim al-Ṭaḥāwī published his thesis as *The Crusader Economy in Bilād al-Shām* (Cairo, 1999), while Zaynab 'Abd al-Qawī published her thesis on *The Role of the English in the Crusades* (Cairo, 1996).¹⁷ Qāsim also supervised the thesis of Zubayda 'Aṭā' which consisted of an edition of Baybars al-Dawādārī's (d. 1325) chronicle *Zubdat al-Fikra min Tārīkh al-Hijra* which she published in Cairo in 2001.¹⁸ In addition to supervising students from Cairo University, Qāsim has also supervised students in the universities of Al-Minyā and Ḥilwān.

Another outstanding medieval historian from Cairo University was Al-Sayyid al-Bāz al-'Arīnī (d. 1969). His works include *Egypt in the Ayyubid Period* (Cairo, 1960), a pioneering study entitled *Historians of the Crusades* (Cairo, 1962), and *The Middle East and the Crusades: 1050 – 1193 A.D.* (Cairo, 1963). He also translated into Arabic Sir Steven Runciman's three-volume *History of the Crusades* (Beirut, 1967 – 1969).¹⁹

¹⁵ Qāsim 'Abduh Qāsim, *Fulcher De Chartres: Al-Istīṭān al-Ṣalībī fi Filastīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2001); Joshua Prawer, *'Ālam al-Ṣalībīyīn*, trans. Qāsim 'Abduh Qāsim and Ḥasan Muḥammad Khalīfa (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1999); Jonathan Riley-Smith, *Tārīkh Ūksfurd li al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya*, trans. Qāsim 'Abduh Qāsim, 2 vols (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2006).

¹⁶ 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Bannā, *Aswāq al-Shām 'Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2007).

¹⁷ Ḥātim al-Ṭaḥāwī, *Al-Iqtisād al-Ṣalībī fi Bilād al-Shām* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1999); Zaynab Abū al-Qawī, *Dawr al-Injlīz fi al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1996).

¹⁸ Baybars al-Dawādārī, *Zubdat al-Fikra min Tārīkh al-Hijra: 'Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk*, ed. Zubayda 'Aṭā' (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2001).

¹⁹ Al-Sayyid al-Bāz al-'Arīnī, *Miṣr fi 'Aṣr al-Ayyūbīyīn* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Kilānī al-Ṣaghīr, 1960); Idem, *Mu'arrīkhū al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Dār al-Naḥḍa al-'Arabīya, 1962); Idem, *Al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ wa al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya (1050-1193 m.)*; Sir Steven Runciman, *Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya*, 3 vols., trans. Al-Sayyid al-Bāz al-'Arīnī (Beirut, Dār al-Thaqāfa li al-Ṭībā'a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1967-1969).

Crusade Studies at Alexandria University

Scholars from Alexandria University have also made great contributions to the study of the Crusades. The historians who laid the foundations of the Alexandrian school of medieval studies include ‘Azīz Suryāl ‘Aṭīya (1898 – 1988), ‘Umar Kamāl Tawfīq (1923 – 1988), and Joseph Nasīm Yūsuf (1925 – 1993). ‘Aṭīya was concerned with the history of the later Crusades, and he stressed the continuation of the Crusades even after the fall of Acre in 1291 to the Mamluks. This interest can be seen in two books which he published in English: *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London, 1935), and *The Crusade in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1938). He also published a book on East-West relations in the Middle Ages entitled *Crusade, Culture and Commerce* (Bloomington, 1962) that was translated into Arabic by Phillip Ṣābir in Cairo in 1972.²⁰ ‘Aṭīya participated in the edition of Ibn Mammātī’s (d. 1209) *Qawānīn al-Dawāwīn* (Cairo, 1943) a valuable source for the administrative and economic history of medieval Egypt, as well as Al-Nuwayrī al-Sikandarī’s (d. 1374) chronicle entitled *Kitāb al-Ilmām* which was published in six volumes in Hyderabad in the Deccan between 1968 and 1976.²¹

‘Aṭīya supervised the MA and PhD theses of Joseph Nasīm Yūsuf. The latter was one of the intellectual pillars of the University of Alexandria. Yūsuf had a particular interest in the Crusading activities of Louis IX of France (1226-1270). His publications on the Crusades include *Louis IX in the Middle East: The Question of Palestine in the Time of the Crusades* (Cairo, 1959), *The Defeat of Louis IX on the Banks of the Nile* (Cairo, 1960), *Arabs, Byzantines, and Latins in the First Crusade* (Alexandria, 1967), *Unity and the Arab Awakening during the Crusader Aggression* (Alexandria, 1967), and *The Crusader Aggression Against Bilād al-Shām* (Alexandria, 1971). He also produced articles on the history of the Sinai Peninsula and the Monastery of St. Catherine in the Middle Ages, as well as a ground-breaking article entitled “The Personal Motive Behind the Crusading Movement” (1963).²² His students included several distinguished historians

²⁰ ‘Azīz Suryāl ‘Aṭīya, *Al-‘Alāqāt bayn al-Sharq wa al-Gharb Tijārīyatan, Thaḳāfīyatan, Ṣalībīyatan*, trans. Filīp Ṣābir (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1972).

²¹ Ibn Mammātī, *Qawānīn al-Dawānīn*, eds. ‘Azīz Suryāl ‘Aṭīya et al. (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1991); Al-Nuwayrī al-Sikandarī, *Kitāb al-Ilmām*, 6 vols., eds. ‘Azīz Suryāl ‘Aṭīya et al. (Hyderabad: Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmānīya, 1968-1976).

²² Jūzif Nasīm Yūsuf, *Luwīs al-Tāsi‘ fī al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ Qaḍīyat Filasṭīn fī ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anglo-Miṣrīya, 1956); Idem, *Hazīmat Luwīs al-Tāsi‘ ‘alā*

such as Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Ḥusayn ‘Aṭīya, Usāma Zakī Zayd, and Maḥmūd Sa‘īd ‘Umrān.

Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Wahhāb wrote a doctoral thesis on “The Order of the Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land: 1190-1291” which was published in Alexandria in 1989.²³ Ḥusayn ‘Aṭīya’s doctoral thesis on the Crusader Principality of Antioch was also published in Alexandria in 1989.²⁴ Usāma Zakī Zayd wrote his MA thesis on relations between the Crusaders and the Ismā‘īlīs in Bilād al-Shām during the twelfth century and published it in Alexandria in 1980, while his doctoral thesis on the city of Sidon (Saida) during the Crusades was published in Alexandria in the following year.²⁵

The most famous pupil of Joseph Nasīm Yūsuf was Maḥmūd Sa‘īd ‘Umrān. ‘Umrān’s MA thesis concerned the Fifth Crusade (1218 - 1222) and he published it in Alexandria in 1978.²⁶ ‘Umrān himself supervised the theses of many historians from Egypt as well as from other Arab countries. One of his pupils was ‘Alī Aḥmad al-Sayyid who wrote an MA thesis on Galilee during the Crusades that was published in 1988, and a PhD thesis on Hebron during the Crusades which was published in 1998.²⁷ The latter work is superb

Difāf al-Nīl (Cairo: Mu‘assasat al-Maṭbū‘āt al-Ḥadītha, 1960); Idem, *Al-‘Arab wa al-Rūm wa al-Lātīn fī al-Ḥarb al-Ṣalībīya al-‘Ulā* (Beirut : Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabīya, 1981); Idem, *Al-Wahḍa wa Ḥarakāt al-Yaqza al-‘Arabīya ibān al-‘Udwān al-Ṣalībī* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1966); Idem, *Al-‘Udwān al-Ṣalībī ‘alā Bilād al-Shām* (Alexandria: Dār al-Kutub al-Jāmi‘īya, 1971); Idem, *Silsilat Maktabat al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍa al-‘Arabīya, 1981); Idem, “Al-Dāfi‘ al-Shakhṣī fī Qiyām al-Ḥarakat al-Ṣalībīya”, *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adāb Jāmi‘at Iskandarīya*, vol. 16 (1962), pp. 183-211; Idem, “Dirāsa fī Wathā‘iq al-‘Aṣrayn al-Fātimī wa al-Ayyūbī al-Maḥfūza bi Maktabat Dayr Sānt Kātrīn fī Sīnā’”, *Majallat Kulliyat al-Adāb Jāmi‘at Iskandarīya*, vol. 18 (1964), pp. 179-232.

²³ Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, *Tārīkh Jamā‘at al-Fursān al-Teuton fī al-Arāḍī al-Muqaddasa ḥawālī (1190-1291 m./580-690 h.)* (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma‘ārif al-Jāmi‘īya, 1989).

²⁴ Ḥusayn ‘Aṭīya, *Imārat Anṭākīya al-Ṣalībīya wa al-Muslimīn 1171-1268 m./567-666h.* (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma‘ārif al-Jāmi‘īya, 1989).

²⁵ Usāma Zakī Zayd, *Al-Ṣalībīyūn wa Ismā‘īliyat al-Shām ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya al-Qarn al-Thānī ‘Ashar m. al-Sādis h.* (Alexandria: Al-Hay‘a al-‘Āmma al-Miṣrīya li al-Kitāb, 1980); *Ṣaydā wa Dawruhā fī al-Ṣirā‘ al-Ṣalībī al-Islāmī* (Alexandria: Al-Hay‘a al-‘Āmma al-Miṣrīya li al-Kitāb, 1981).

²⁶ Maḥmūd Sa‘īd ‘Umrān, *Al-Ḥamlat al-Ṣalībīya al-Khāmisa 1218-1222 m.* (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1985).

²⁷ ‘Alī Aḥmad al-Sayyid, “Al-Jalīl ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya” (MA thesis, Alexandria University, 1988); Idem, *Al-Khalīl ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1998).

and represents a true landmark in Egyptian scholarship of the Crusades. Another of 'Umrān's doctoral students was 'Alī Sa'īd 'Abdallāh al-Bīshāwī, the pioneer of the Palestinian school of Crusade historiography. Bīshāwī wrote an outstanding doctoral dissertation on the Church properties in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem which was published in Amman in 2015.²⁸

An example of the young and upcoming generation of Egyptian historians of the Crusades is Aḥmad Sha'īr (Ahmed Sheir) who wrote his MA thesis on "The Fief of Tibnīn (Toron) and its Castle in the Age of the Crusades (1105 – 1266 A.D./498 – 664 A.H.): A Study of its Economic, Political, and Military Role" at the University of Göttingen in Germany under the supervision of 'Alī Aḥmad al-Sayyid (Damanhour University) and Prof. Frank Rexroth (Göttingen University) in 2014. More recently, he wrote his PhD dissertation at Marburg University under Prof. Albrecht Fuess and Prof. Frank Rexroth and published it in English as *The Prester John Legend between East and West during the Crusades: Entangled Eastern-Latin Mythical Legacies* (Budapest, 2022).²⁹

Crusade Studies at 'Ayn Shams University

At 'Ayn Shams University, I have personally participated in the supervision of a number of MA theses on the Crusades, including Hanādī al-Sayyid Maḥmūd's dissertation on King Baldwin I of Jerusalem (1100 – 1118), Ṣafā' 'Uthmān's thesis on Baldwin II (1118 – 1131) and Nuḥā al-Jawharī's thesis on the Crusader Principality of Tripoli in the thirteenth century, all three of which were published in Cairo in 2008.³⁰

²⁸ Sa'īd 'Abdallāh al-Bīshāwī, *Al-Mumtalikāt al-Kanaṣīya fī Mamlakat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Ṣalībīya* (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma'rifa al-Jāmi'īya, 1989, reprinted Amman: Dār al-Shaymā', 2015).

²⁹ Ahmed Sheir, *The Fief of Tibnin (Toron) and Its Castle in the Age of the Crusades AD (1105-1266/ AH 498'- 664): A Study of Its Economic, Political and Military Role* (Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2015); Idem, *The Prester John Legend between East and West during the Crusades. Entangled Eastern-Latin Mythical Legacies, Mediterranean Studies Series*, vol 1 (Budapest: Trivent Publishing, 2022).

³⁰ Hanādī al-Sayyid Maḥmūd, *Mamlakat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Ṣalībīya fī 'Ahd al-Malik Baldwīn I 1100-1118 m./494-512 h.* (Cairo: Dār al-'Ālam al-'Arabī, 2008); Ṣafā' 'Uthmān Ibrāhīm, *Mamlakat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Ṣalībīya fī 'Ahd al-Malik Baldwin II 1118-1131 m./512-525h.* (Cairo: Dār al-'Ālam al-'Arabī, 2008); Nuḥā al-Jawharī, *Imārat Ṭarāblus al-Ṣalībīya fī al-Qarn al-Thālith 'Ashar al-Milādī/al-Sābi' al-Hijrī* (Cairo: Dār al-'Ālam al-'Arabī, 2008).

For my part I have published the following works on the history of the Crusades: *European Travelers in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: 1099 – 1187* (Cairo, 1992), *The Muslim Geographers and Travelers in Bilād al-Shām during the Crusades* (Cairo, 1995), *Earthquakes in Bilād al-Shām in the Time of the Crusades* (Cairo, 1996), *The Battle of Arsūf in 587/1191* (Cairo, 1997), *The Foreign Policy of Nūr al-Dīn Zankī 1146 – 1174* (Cairo, 1998), *The Crusades: An Historical-Critical Study* (Ramallah, 1999), *The Crusades: Relations Between the East and the West in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cairo: 1999 – 2000), *The Crusades: Politics, Water, and Doctrine* (Cairo, 2001), *Al-Zāhir Baybars Founder of the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt* (Cairo: 2006), *The Crusader Castles in Bilād al-Shām in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cairo, 2006), *Studies and Articles on the Period of the Crusades* (Cairo, 2007), *A Short Survey of the Crusades* (Cairo, 2010), *The Crusades in Comparative History* (Cairo, 2010), and *New Light on the History of the Crusades* (Ramallah, 2011).³¹

I have also published numerous studies on Saladin (Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī). These include the following: *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn between History and Legend* (Cairo, 2008), *The Journey of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (Cairo, 2011), *They Spoke thus About Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (Cairo, 2013), *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: Cavalier of the Wars of the Crusades, Views and Conceptions* (Cairo, 2013), *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: Presentation and Criticism* (Cairo, 2014), *Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Zankī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: Two Knights of the Period of the Crusades* (Jerusalem, 2015), *My Journey with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: Drops from*

³¹ Muḥammad Mu'nis 'Awaḍ, *Al-Raḥḥāla al-Urūbiyyūn fī Mamlakat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Ṣalībīya 1099-1187 m.* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbulī, 1992); Idem, *Al-Jughrāfiyyūn wa al-Raḥḥāla al-Muslimūn fī Bilād al-Shām Zaman al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1995); Idem, *Al-Zalāzil fī Bilād al-Shām 'Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1996); Idem, *Fī al-Ṣirā' al-Islāmī – al-Ṣalībī: Ma'rakat Arsūf 1191 m./587 h.* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1997); Idem, *Fī al-Ṣirā' al-Islāmī al-Ṣalībī: Al-Siyāsa al-Khārijīya li al-Dawlat al-Nūrīya 1146-1174 m.* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1998); Idem, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: Dirāsa Tārīkhīya wa Naqdiyya* (Ramallah: Dār al-Shurūq, 1999); Idem, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: Al-'Alāqāt bayn al-Sharq wa al-Gharb fī al-Qarnayn 12,13 m./6,7, h.* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2000); Idem, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: Al-Siyāsa, Al-Miyāh, al-'Aqīda* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2001); Idem, *Al-Zāhir Baybars Mu'assis Dawlat Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk fī Miṣr* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 2006); Idem, *Al-Qilā' al-Ṣalībīya fī Bilād al-Shām fī al-Qarnayn 12/13* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2006); Idem, *'Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: Buḥūth wa Maqālāt* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2007); Idem, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: 'Arḍ Mawjiz* (Cairo: Dār al-'Ālam al-'Arabī, 2010); Idem, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: Dirāsāt fī al-Tārīkh al-Muqāran* (Cairo: Dār al-'Ālam al-'Arabī, 2010).

the Cascades of Memory (Sharjah, 2017), *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: Defeats and Victories* (Damascus, 2020), *From World History to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Sharjah, 2020), *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī in Arab and Western Encyclopedias* (Damascus, 2020), and *History is a Woman: Light on the Age of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Cairo, 2023).³²

As for reference works, I have published an *Encyclopedia of the Personalities of the Crusades in the East and the West* (Cairo, 2015).³³ In cooperation with my student Hanādī al-Sayyid Maḥmūd I have edited two works on European primary sources: the first is *The Speech of Pope Urban II at Clermont on the 27th of November 1095: Studies and Essays* (Cairo, 2017), and the second is *The Historian of the Crusades William of Tyre between Arab and Western Viewpoints* (Cairo, 2017).³⁴ I have also published two bibliographical works on the Crusades: *A Bibliography of the Crusades* (Cairo, 1996), and *Light on the Bibliography of the Crusades* (Ramallah, 2013).³⁵

³² Muḥammad Mu'nis 'Awad, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī bayn al-Tārīkh wa al-Uṣṭūra* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2008); Idem, *Riḥlat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Cairo: Dār al-'Ālam al-'Arabī, 2012); Idem, *Qālū 'an Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Al-Ayyūbī* (Cairo: Dār al-Karaz, 2013); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī Fāris 'Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Ramallah: Dār al-Shaymā', 2014); Idem, 100 Kitāb 'an Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: 'Arḍ wa Naqd (Cairo: Dār al-Āfāq al-'Arabīya, 2015); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī wa 'Aṣruhu: Madkhal Bibliyūghrafī* (Ramallah: Dār al-Shaymā', 2015); Idem, *Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd wa Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: Fārisān Mujāhidān min 'Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Jerusalem: Dār al-Jundī li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2015); Idem, *Riḥlatī ma'a Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: Qatarāt min Shallālāt al-Dhākira* (Sharjah: Dā'irat al-Thaqāfa wa al-I'lām, 2017); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī: Inkisārāt wa Intiṣārāt* (Damascus: Dār Ḥawrān 2020); Idem, *Min al-Tārīkh al-'Ālamī li Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Sharjah: Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif wa al-I'lām, 2020); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī fī al-Mawsū'āt al-'Arabīya wa al-Gharbīya* (Damascus: Dār Ḥawrān, 2020); Idem, *Al-Tārīkh Imra'a: Aḍwā' 'alā 'Aṣri Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī* (Giza: Dār 'Ābid li al-Nashr, 2023).

³³ Muḥammad Mu'nis 'Awad, *Mu'jam A'lām 'Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya fī al-Sharq wa al-Gharb* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Adāb, 2015).

³⁴ Muḥammad Mu'nis 'Awad and Hanādī al-Sayyid Maḥmūd, eds. *Khīṭāb Al-Bābā Urbān al-Thānī fī Clermont 27 November 1095: Dirāsāt wa Buḥūth* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Adāb, 2017); Muḥammad Mu'nis 'Awad and Hanādī al-Sayyid Maḥmūd, eds. *Al-Mu'arrikh al-Ṣalībī Wilyam al-Ṣūrī bayn Ru'yatayn 'Arabīya wa Gharbīya* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Adāb, 2017).

³⁵ Muḥammad Mu'nis 'Awad, *Fuṣūl Bibliyūghrafīya fī Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: 'Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 1996; Idem, *Aḍwā' 'alā Bibliyūghrafīyā Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Ramallah: Dār al-Shaymā', 2013).

Crusade Studies in Iraq

The Iraqi historians have also devoted much interest and attention to the history of the Crusades. In particular, they have highlighted the important role of Mosul in the Islamic resistance to the Crusaders. We will mention here the most prominent Iraqi historians of the Crusades such as ‘Imād al-Dīn Khalīl, Nāṣir Mullā Jāsim, Maysūn Dhanūn al-‘Abābjī, Ṭalab Ṣabbār al-Jannābī, Maḥmūd Yāsīn al-Tikrītī, and Muḥsin Muḥammad Ḥusayn.

The pioneer historian ‘Imād al-Dīn Khalīl has published numerous studies such as *The Artuqid Amirates in the Jazīra: 465/1072 – 812/1409* (Beirut, 1980), *The Islamic Resistance to the Crusader Invasions in the Time of the Seljuk Governors of Mosul: 489 – 521 A.H./1095 – 1127 A.D.* (Riyadh, 1981), *Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Zankī: the Man and the Ordeal* (Damascus, 1981), and *‘Imād al-Dīn Zankī* (Beirut, 1982).³⁶

Nāṣir Mullā Jāsim wrote his MA thesis on “Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī in the Studies of the English and American Orientalists” (1992) which has unfortunately not been published yet. His articles include “The Image of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in the English Romances” (1996), “The History *Al-Nawādir Al-Sultāniya* of Al-Qāḍī Bahā’ al-Dīn b. Shaddād in Anglophone Orientalist Studies” (1998), and “The Liberation of Jerusalem in Orientalist Studies” (2000).³⁷

Al-‘Abābjī wrote her MA thesis on “Ibn al-Athīr’s Chronicle *Al-Kāmil* as a source for the Study of the Civilization of Mosul” and her doctoral dissertation on “Ibn al-Athīr as a Historian of the Crusades: 1096 – 1192”. The latter was published in Beirut in 2020. Her other studies include “The Fifth

³⁶ ‘Imād al-Dīn Khalīl, *Al-Imārāt al-Artuqiya fi al-Jazīrat al-Furātiya (1072-1409 m./465-812 h.)* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1980; republished Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2019); Idem, *Al-Muqāwama al-Islāmiya li al-Ghazw al-Ṣalībī ‘Aṣr Wulāt al-Salājiqa fi al-Mawṣil 1095-1127m./489-521 h.* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Ma’ārif, 1981, reprinted Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2005); Idem, *Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd: Al-Rajul wa al-Tajriba* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam, 1981); Idem, *‘Imād al-Dīn Zankī* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1982).

³⁷ Nāṣir Mullā Jāsim, “Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī fi al-Dirāsāt al-Istishrāqiya al-Injlīziya wa al-Amrikīya” (MA thesis, Mosul University, 1992); Idem, “Ṣūrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn fi al-Qiṣaṣ al-Rūmānsīya al-Injlīziya” *Majallāt Markaz al-Wathā’iq wa al-Dirāsāt al-Inṣāniya bi Jāmi‘at Qaṭar*, no. 8 (1996) pp. 271-286; Idem, “Al-Nawādir al-Sultāniya li al-Qāḍī Bahā’ al-Dīn b. Shaddād fi al-Dirāsāt al-Istishrāqiya al-Nāṭiqā bi al-Inklīziya”, *Majallāt al-Baḥrayn al-Thaqāfiya*, no. 18 (2018); Idem, “Taḥrīr al-Quds fi Dirāsāt al-Mustashriqīn” in *A‘māl Mu‘tamar Bilād al-Shām fi Fatrat al-Ṣirā‘ al-Islāmī – al-Franjī*, ed. Yūsuf Ghawānma (Irbid: Yarmuk University, 2000).

Crusade in the Works of Contemporary Historians” (2006), and “The Franks in Ibn al-Athīr’s *Al-Bāhir fī al-Dawlat al-Atābakīya*” (2008).³⁸

Ṭalab Ṣabbār al-Jannābī wrote a PhD thesis entitled “The Principality of Antioch: A Study of its Political Relations with the Islamic Powers: 1098 – 1265” which was published in Damascus in 2014. He also published a volume of articles on the Crusades entitled *Studies in the History of the Crusades* (Beirut 2013).³⁹ Maḥmūd Yāsīn al-Tikrīfī wrote his PhD thesis on “The Ayyubids in Northern Syria and the Jazīra: 1168 – 1250” and published it in Baghdad in 1985. It was reprinted in Amman in 2020. Muḥsin Muḥammad Ḥusayn wrote a study entitled *Erbil in the Age of the Atabegs: 1128 – 1233* (Baghdad, 1976) and another on *The Ayyubid Army in the Age of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: Its Composition, Organization, Weapons, and Most Notable Battles* (Beirut, 1986).

Crusade Studies in Bilād al-Shām

In Syria, Crusade Studies have been dominated by the work of the famous historian Ṣuhayl Zakkār (1936 - 2020) who published the *Comprehensive Encyclopedia of the Crusades*, also known as *The Syrian Encyclopedia of the Crusades* (Damascus, 1995) in 50 volumes.⁴⁰ This monumental work contains editions and translations of primary sources for the Crusades, both Eastern and Western. The Crusader sources translated in the series include the works of William of Tyre and Ambroise while the Arabic primary sources include an edition of Ibn al-Qalānīsī’s *Dhayl Tārīkh Dimashq*. Zakkār’s studies include *Ḥaṭṭīn and the Journey of Liberation from Damascus to Jerusalem* (Damascus, 1984),

³⁸ Maysūn Dhanūn al-‘Abābjī, “Al-Kāmil li Ibn al-Athīr Maṣdar li Dirāsāt al-Aḥwāl al-Ḥaḍārīya fī al-Mawṣil” (MA thesis, Mosul University); Idem, “Ibn al-Athīr Mu’arrīkhan li al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya 490-588 h. 1096-1192 m.” (PhD thesis, Mosul University, 2003); Idem, “Al-Ḥamlat al-Ṣalībīya al-Khāmisa fī Kitābāt al-Mu’arrīkhīn al-Mu’āṣirīn”, *Majallat Ādāb al-Rāfidayn*, no. 44 (2006); Idem, “Al-Franj min khilāl Kitāb al-Bāhir fī Dawlat al-Atābakīya li Ibn al-Athīr”, *Majallat al-Tarbīya wa al-‘Ilm*, vol. 15, no. 2 (2008) pp. 22-50.

³⁹ Ṭalab Ṣabbār al-Jannābī, *Imārat Antākīya Dirāsa fī ‘Alāqātihā al-Siyāsīya bi al-Qiwā al-Islāmīya 491-666 h./1098-1265 m.* (Damascus: Dār Nīnawā, 2014); Idem, *Abḥāth fī Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Beirut, Dār al-Bayḍā’ 2013); Maḥmūd Yāsīn al-Tikrīfī, *Al-Ayyūbiyūn fī Shimāl al-Shām wa al-Jazīra* (Amman: Dār Ibn al-Nafīs, 2020); Muḥsin Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *Irbil fī al-‘Ahd al-Atābakī* (Baghdad: Maktabat As‘ad, 1976); Idem, *Al-Jaysh al-Ayyūbī fī ‘Ahd Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1986).

⁴⁰ Suhayl Zakkār, *Al-Mawṣū‘a al-Shāmīla fī Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya*, 50 vols. (Damascus: Dār al-Fīkr, 1995).

Ḥaṭṭīn and the Ṣalāḥīd Liberation of Jerusalem (Beirut, 2002), and a joint volume entitled *The Frankish Wars or Crusades* (Damascus, 2005).⁴¹

Another prominent Syrian historian was Shākīr Muṣṭafā (1921 – 1997) who wrote a crucial reference work in three volumes on medieval Arabic historiography entitled *Arab History and Historians* (Beirut, 1978) which gives extensive coverage of the historians of the Crusades who wrote in Arabic.⁴² He also wrote *Memoirs of the Frankish Wars* (Damascus, 1996), and *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn the Maligned Warrior-Knight and Ascetic-King* (Beirut and Damascus, 2003).⁴³ ‘Ādil Zaynūn wrote two important studies: *Economic Relations between the East and West in the Middle Ages* (Damascus, 1980) and *Political Relations between the Byzantine East and the Latin West in the Middle Ages* (Damascus, 1980).⁴⁴ Finally, we should also mention here ‘Abd al-Salām Zīdān, a Syrian historian who studied in Egypt at Asyūṭ University where he was a pupil of Maḥmūd al-Ḥuwayrī. He wrote his MA thesis on “The Second Crusade: 1147-1149” and his PhD dissertation on “The Call to Crusade from 1095 to 1187”.⁴⁵

As for Lebanon, we should mention the contribution of Zakī Naqqāsh, who wrote a book on *The Social, Cultural, and Economic Relations between the Arabs and the Franks during the Crusades* (Beirut, 1946).⁴⁶ In addition, the famous Lebanese novelist (and lover of history!) Amīn Ma ‘lūf (Amin Maalouf) wrote a book in French entitled *Les Croisades vues par les Arabes* (Paris 1983) which

⁴¹ Suhayl Zakkār, *Ḥaṭṭīn: Masīrat al-Tahrīr min Dimashq ilā al-Quds* (Damascus: Dār Ḥassān, 1984); Idem, *Ḥaṭṭīn wa al-Faṭḥ al-Ṣalāḥī li al-Quds* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2002); Idem, *Ḥurūb al-Faranja al-Ṣalībīya* (Damascus: Manshūrāt Jāmi‘at Dimashq).

⁴² Shākīr Muṣṭafā, *Al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī wa al-Mu‘arrīkhūn*, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1979).

⁴³ Shākīr Muṣṭafā, *Min Dhikrayyāt al-Ghazw al-Franjī: Wujūh min al-‘Ahd al-Ṣalībī* (Damascus: Dār Tlās, 1996); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Fāris al-Mujāhid wa al-Malik al-Muftarā ‘alayhi* (Beirut and Damascus, 2003).

⁴⁴ ‘Ādil Zaynūn, *Al-‘Alāqāt al-Iqtisādīya bayn al-Sharq wa al-Gharb fī al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (Damascus: Dār Dimashq, 1980); Idem, *Al-‘Alāqāt al-Siyāsīya wa al-Kanasīya bayn al-Sharq al-Bīzanṭī wa al-Gharb al-Lātīnī fī al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (Damascus: Dār Dimashq, 1980).

⁴⁵ ‘Abd al-Salām Zīdān, “Al-Ḥamla al-Ṣalībīya al-Thāniya: 1147 – 1149 m.” (MA thesis, Asyūṭ University, 2000); Idem, “Al-Da‘wā li al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya mundhu ‘Āmm 1095 ilā 1187” (PhD thesis, Asyūṭ University, 2004).

⁴⁶ Zakī Naqqāsh, *Al-‘Alāqāt al-Ijtīmā‘īya wa al-Thaqāfiya wa al-Iqtisādīya bayn al-‘Arab wa al-Ifranji khilāl al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1946).

was translated into Arabic in Beirut by ‘Afif Dimashqīya.⁴⁷ Muḥammad Suhayl Taqqūsh has written a work about *The History of the Crusades (Or Wars of the Franks in the East): 489 – 690 A.H./1096 – 1291 A.D.* which was published in Beirut in 2011.⁴⁸ Finally, the veteran Lebanese historian and editor of manuscripts ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmurī has written many works that are relevant to the field of Crusade studies. Particularly important is his fifteen-volume *Encyclopedia of Muslim Scholars in the Islamic History of Lebanon through Fourteen Centuries* (Beirut, 1984-1992).⁴⁹

Palestinian historians have always shown great enthusiasm for studying the Crusades, which unfolded in their homeland of Palestine and across the wider region of Bilād al-Shām. Some of the most prominent Palestinian researchers in this field include Sa‘īd ‘Abdallāh al-Bīshāwī, Fu‘ād al-Duwaykāt, Nu‘mān Jubrān, Munā Ḥammād, and Jalāl Ḥusnī Salāma. ‘Abdallāh al-Bīshāwī’s studies include *Nāblus: Its Political, Social and Cultural Conditions: 492 – 690 A.H./1099 – 1291 A.D.* (Amman, 1991) and *The Church Properties in the Kingdom of Jerusalem: 492 – 690 A.H./1099 – 1291 A.D.* (Cairo, 1989). In addition he has translated into Arabic travel accounts of medieval European pilgrims to the Holy Land such as *The Voyage of the Russian Pilgrim Daniel the Monk in the Holy Land: 1106-1107 A.D.* (Amman, 2003), *The Description of the Holy Land by the German Pilgrim Burchard from the Monastery of Mount Sion* (Amman, 1995), *The Account of the Journey of the Pilgrim Saewulf in Jerusalem and the Holy Land: 1102-1103 A.D.* (Ramallah, 1997), *The Description of the Holy Lands in Palestine by the German Traveler John of Wurzburg* (Amman, 1997), *The Travels of the Pilgrim Theoderic in the Holy Land in the 6th century A.H./12th century A.D.* (Amman, 2003), *The Description of Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Travel Account of Fetellus: c. 1130 A.D.* (Amman, 2008), and “The Voyage of Ioannis Phocas to the Holy Land in 1185 A.D.” (Jerusalem, 2010).⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Amīn Ma‘lūf, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya kamā Rāhā al-‘Arab*, trans. ‘Afif Dimashqīya (Beirut: Dār al-Fārābī, 1989).

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Suhayl Taqqūsh, *Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā’is, 2011).

⁴⁹ ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmurī, *Mawsū‘at ‘Ulamā’ al-Muslimīn fī Tārīkh Lubnān al-Islāmī*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣrīya, 1984-1992).

⁵⁰ Sa‘īd ‘Abdallāh al-Bīshāwī, *Nāblus: Al-Awḍā’ al-Sīyāsīya wa al-Ijtīmā’īya wa al-Thaqāfīya khilāl al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya 1099 – 1291 m.* (Amman: Al-Maktaba al-Waṭanīya, 1991); Idem, *Al-Mumtalikāt al-Kanasīya fī Mamlakat Bayt al-Maqdis al-Ṣalībīya 1099-1291 m.* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif al-Jāmi‘īya, 1989); Idem, *Waṣf al-Arāḍī al-Muqaddasa fī Filasṭīn li al-Ḥājj al-Rūsī Dāniyāl al-Rāhib 1106-1107 m* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003);

Fu'ād al-Duwaykāt has published his MA thesis under the title *The History of the Fiefs of Tiberias and their role in the Crusader-Muslim Conflict: 412 – 583 A.H./1099 – 1187 A.D.* (Iribid, 2011) and he published his PhD thesis as *The Fiefs of Eastern Jordan in the Crusader Period: 492 – 583 A.H./1099 – 1187 A.D.* (Amman, 2012). He also translated the *Travels of Petachiah of Ratisbon* into Arabic (Iribid, 2011).⁵¹ Nu' mān Jubrān has published a volume entitled *Studies in the History of the Ayyubids and Mamluks* (Iribid, 2000) as well as an important article on "The Armenian Sources and their Importance in the Study of the Crusades" (2007).⁵² Jalāl Ḥusnī Salāma has published a book on *Acre during the Third Crusade* (Nablus, 1998). His PhD thesis, from 'Ayn Shams University, is entitled "Crusader Settlement in the Holy Land: 1099 – 1187 A.D." (2004). He also translated into Arabic *Anonymous Travelers in the Holy Land* (Ramallah, 2012).⁵³

Several historians in Jordan have written on the Crusades, such as Yūsuf Darwīsh Ghawānmaḥ, who has published an important study on *The Ayyubid Principality of Kerak* (Kerak, 1980), and Muṣṭafā al-Ḥiyārī who has published important articles including: "The City of Banias in the Sixth Century

Idem, *Wasf al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasa bi Waṣāṭat al-Raḥḥāla al-Almānī Būrshārd min Dayr Jabal Sahyūn* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 1995); Idem, *Wasf Riḥlat al-Ḥājj Saewulf li Bayt al-Maqdis wa al-Arāḍi al-Muqaddasa 1102-1103 m.* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 1997); Idem, *Wasf al-Arāḍi al-Muqaddasa fi Filastīn li Yuḥannā Wurzburg* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 1997); Idem, *Wasf al-Amākin al-Muqaddasa fi Filastīn li al-Raḥḥāla al-Almānī Thiyūdirīsh al-Qarn 12 m./6 h.* (Amman: Dār al-Shurūq, 2003); Idem, *Wasf al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasa fi Filastīn ḥawālī 1130 m./525 h. li al-Raḥḥāla Fetellus* (Iribid: Dār Ḥammāda, 2008); Idem, "Riḥlat Yuwānis Fūqās fi al-Arāḍi al-Muqaddasa 571 h./1185 m." *Majallat Jāmi'at al-Quds al-Maftūḥa*, no. 18 (2010) pp. 95-141.

⁵¹ Fu'ād 'Abd al-Raḥīm al-Duwaykāt, *Iqtā'iyat Sharq al-Urdunn fi 'Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya 492-583 h./1099 – 1187 m.* (Amman: Durūb Thaḳāfiya li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2012); Idem, *Iqtā'iyat Ṭabarīya wa Dawruhā fi al-Ṣirā' al-Ṣalībī al-Islāmī 492-690 h./1099 – 1291 m.* (Iribid: Mu'assasat Ḥamāda, 2011); Idem, *Riḥlat Rabbī Petachiah al-Rātisbūnī 571-576 h./ 1175-1180 m.* (Iribid: Dār al-Kitāb al-Thaḳāfi, 2011).

⁵² Nu' mān Maḥmūd Jubrān, *Dirāsāt fi Tārīkh al-Ayyūbiyīn wa al-Mamālik* (Iribid: Mu'assasat Ḥamāda, 2000); Idem, "Al-Maṣādir al-Armīniya wa Aḥammīyatuhā li Dirāsāt Tārīkh al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: Ḥawliyat Mattā al-Ruhāwī Anmūdhajan" in *Nadwat Bilād al-Shām fi Fatrat al-Ṣirā' al-Islāmī al-Franjī 491-690 h.* (Iribid: Yarmuk University Press, 2000), pp. 101-130.

⁵³ Jalāl Ḥusnī 'Abd al-Hamīd Salāma, 'Akkā fi athnā' al-Ḥamlat al-Ṣalībīyat al-Thālitha (Nablus: Dār al-Fārūq, 1998); Idem, "Al-Istīṭān al-Ṣalībī fi al-Arāḍi al-Muqaddasa 1099-1187 m." (PhD thesis, 'Ayn Shams Univ., 2004); Idem, *Wasf al-Arḍ al-Muqaddasa li Majmū'at min al-Raḥḥālat al-Majhūlīn* (Ramallah: Dār al-Shaymā', 2012).

A.H./Twelfth Century A.D.” (1986), “The Fortress of Ḥabīs Jaldak” (1986), and “The Fortress of Bayt al-Aḥzān: An Aspect of Relations between the Muslims and the Franks in the Time of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn” (1986). Al-Ḥiyārī also wrote a monograph on *Jerusalem between the Fatimids and the Franks* (Amman, 1994) and another entitled *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: The Leader of His Age*.⁵⁴

Crusade Studies in the Arabian Peninsula

Yemeni scholars who have contributed to Crusade studies include Muḥammad Maḥyūb al-Muqaddim, from Ta'iz University, who wrote his MA dissertation at Manṣūra University in Egypt on “Assassinations in Bilād al-Shām and the Jazīra during the Crusades” and published it in Cairo in 2008 as well as an important but unfortunately unpublished PhD thesis from the same university on “The Proselytizing Efforts of the Catholic Church in the Arab World in the Time of the Crusades.”⁵⁵ Hudā al-Wīsī wrote her MA thesis at the University of Ṣan'ā' on “Earthquakes in Bilād al-Shām during the Crusades: 12th – 13th centuries” and it was published in Cairo in 2008. Her PhD thesis from 'Ayn Shams University concerns “The Image of the Europeans in Arab-Islamic Sources of the 12th and 13th Centuries” (2011).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Yūsuf Darwīsh Ghawānma, *Imārat al-Karak al-Ayyūbiya* (Kerak, Jordan: Baladīyat al-Karak, 1980); Muṣṭafā al-Ḥiyārī, “Madīnat Bāniyās fī al-Qarn al-Sādis al-Hijrī/al-Thānī ‘Ashar al-Milādī”, *Majallat Dirāsāt al-‘Ulūm al-Insāniya wa al-Ijtimā’iya li al-Jāmi‘at al-Urdunīya*, vol. 13, no. 12 (December 1986), pp. 161-188; Idem, “Ḥiṣn Ḥabīs Jaldak: Jānib min al-‘Alāqāt bayn al-Muslimīn wa al-Franja fī al-Qarn al-Thānī ‘Ashar al-Milādī”, *Majallat Dirāsāt al-‘Ulūm al-Insāniya wa al-Ijtimā’iya li al-Jāmi‘at al-Urdunīya*, vol. 13, no. 12 (December 1986), pp. 141-161; Idem, “Ḥiṣn Bayt al-Aḥzān: Jānib min al-‘Alāqāt bayn al-Muslimīn wa al-Franja al-Ṣalībīyīn”, *Majallat Dirāsāt al-‘Ulūm al-Insāniya wa al-Ijtimā’iya li al-Jāmi‘at al-Urdunīya*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1986), pp. 39-60; Idem, *Al-Quds fī Zaman al-Franja* (Amman: Maktabat Amman, 1994); Idem, *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: Al-Qā'id wa 'Aṣrihi* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1994).

⁵⁵ Muḥammad Maḥyūb al-Muqaddim, *Al-Ightiyālāt fī Bilād al-Shām wa al-Jazīra Zaman al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Dār al-‘Ālam al-‘Arabī, 2008); Idem, “Al-Juhūd al-Tabshīriya li al-Kanīsa al-Kāthūlikīya fī al-Minṭaqa al-‘Arabīya fī ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya” (PhD thesis, Manṣūra University, 2010).

⁵⁶ Hudā Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Wīsī, *Al-Hazzāt al-Arḍīya fī Bilād al-Shām ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Cairo: Dār al-‘Ālam al-‘Arabī, 2008); Idem, “Ṣūrāt al-Ūrūbiyīn fī al-Maṣādir al-‘Arabīya al-Islāmīya al-Qarnān 6-7 h./12-13 m.” (PhD thesis, 'Ayn Shams University, 2011).

In Saudi Arabia, we find that the Egyptian historians who were loaned to universities in that country as long-term visiting professors have supervised a number of Saudi theses on the history of the Crusades. Among these historians are Ḥasanayn Rabī', 'Alī al-Ghumrāwī, 'Alīya al-Janzūrī, and 'Afāf Ṣabra. 'Abdallāh al-Rabī'ī wrote an MA thesis on "The Influence of the Islamic East on European Thought during the Crusades" which was published in Riyadh in 1994.⁵⁷ 'Alī Ṣāliḥ b. al-Maḥaymīd's MA thesis dealt with "The Danishmendids and their Jihad in Anatolia" and was published in Alexandria in 1994.⁵⁸ Sāmī al-Maghlūth published an *Atlas of the Crusades in the Islamic East during the Middle Ages* (Riyadh, 2009).⁵⁹ Āmāl Ḥasan 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ wrote her MA thesis on "The Battle of Manzikert" (1982).⁶⁰ Thurayā al-Ghānimī wrote an MA thesis on "The Jihād of Mosul against the Crusaders in the Time of its Amīr Mawdūd Altun-Tekin and Aqsunqur al-Bursuqī" (1983), and a doctoral dissertation on "Jerusalem in the Ayyubid Period" (1991).⁶¹

A number of theses on the Crusades have recently been defended at Sharjah University in the United Arab Emirates as well. Sāmīya Balūshī wrote an MA thesis on "Women in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām during the Ayyubid Period".⁶² 'Abd al-Qādir al-Yāsī wrote his MA dissertation on "The Crusades and the Sieges of Islamic Cities in Bilād al-Shām" which was published in Sharjah in 2020 as well as a doctoral thesis with the title "Ibn Khallikān (d. 1282) Historian of the Ayyubid State" (2023).⁶³ Ḥissa 'Uthmān wrote an MA

⁵⁷ 'Abdallāh al-Rabī'ī, *Athar al-Sharq al-Islāmī fī al-Fikr al-Ūrūbī khilāl al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Riyadh: n.p., 1994).

⁵⁸ 'Alī Ṣāliḥ b. al-Maḥaymid, *Al-Dānishmandīyūn wa Jihādūhum fī Bilād al-Anādūl* (Alexandria: Mu'assasat Shabāb al-Jāmi'a, 1994).

⁵⁹ Sāmī b. 'Abdallāh al-Maghlūth, *Aṭlas al-Ḥamalāt al-Ṣalībīya 'alā al-Mashriq al-Islāmī fī al-'Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-'Ubaykān, 2009).

⁶⁰ Āmāl Ḥasan 'Abd al-Ḥāfiẓ, "Mawqī'at Mānzikart (Malāzkird) 463 h./1071 m." (MA thesis, Malik 'Abd al-'Azīz University, Jedda, 1983).

⁶¹ Thurayā' al-Ghānimī, "Jihād al-Mawṣil ḍidd al-Ṣalībīyīn fī 'Ahd Amīrihā Mawdūd Altūntakīn wa Aqsunqur al-Bursuqī" (MA thesis, King 'Abd al-'Azīz University, Jedda, 1983); Idem, "Bayt al-Maqdis fī al-'Aṣr al-Ayyūbī (583-648 h./1187-1250 m.)" (PhD thesis, King 'Abd al-'Azīz University, Jedda, 1991).

⁶² Sāmīya al-Balūshī, "Al-Mar'a fī Miṣr wa Bilād al-Shām fī al-'Aṣr al-Ayyūbī (1174-1250 m.)" (MA thesis, Sharjah University, 2011).

⁶³ 'Abd al-Qādir Ḥāshim Muḥammad al-Yāsī, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya wa Ḥiṣār al-Mudun al-Islāmīya fī Bilād al-Shām (491-587 h./1097-1191 m.)* (Sharjah: Dā'irat al-Thaqāfa, 2020); Idem, "Ibn Khallikān Mu'arrikhan li al-Dawlat al-Ayyūbiya" (PhD thesis, Sharjah University, 2023).

thesis on “The Massacres Carried out by the Crusaders in Europe and Bilād al-Shām in the Period between 1096 and 1190” (2022).⁶⁴ ‘Ā’isha al-Kutubī wrote an MA thesis on “The Speech of Pope Urban II at the Council of Clermont on November 27, 1095 and its Consequences” (2023).⁶⁵ Munā Maḥmūd’s MA thesis is entitled “Al-Idrīsī’s *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq* as a Source for Bilād al-Shām during the Crusades” (2023) while Ḥalīma al-‘Affād’s MA dissertation is entitled “The Battle of Manzikert 1071 A.D. and the Battle of Ḥaṭṭīn 1087 A.D.: A Comparative Study” (2023).⁶⁶ Ḥamad al-‘Alīlī wrote a comparative study of the battles of Ḥaṭṭīn and ‘Ayn Jālūt for his MA thesis which was defended in 2023.⁶⁷ Ṭariq al-Zuhūrī defended his MA thesis on “The Economic and Religious Motives for the Crusades between 1098 and 1204” (2023).⁶⁸

Crusade Studies in the Maghreb

In Libya, the distinguished historian Najāḥ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Qābisī has written a valuable article entitled “Directions in the Study of the History of the Crusades” (1988).⁶⁹ Muḥammad al-‘Arūsī al-Muṭawī (1920 – 2005), who was president of the Tunisian Writers’ Association and one of the founders of the Tunisian school of historiography, published at a very early date an important book entitled *The Crusades in the East and the West* (Tunis, 1953, reprinted Beirut, 1982) which was the first attempt to connect the Crusader efforts in the eastern and western halves of the Mediterranean Basin. He also wrote a standard history of the Hafsids, entitled *The Hafsid Sultanate* (Beirut, 1986) in

⁶⁴ Ḥiṣṣa ‘Uthmān, “Al-Madhābiḥ Allatī Qāma bihā Al-Ṣalībīyūn fī al-Gharb al-Urūbī wa Bilād al-Shām khilāl al-Marḥala min 1096 ilā 1190 m.” (MA thesis, Sharjah University, 2022).

⁶⁵ ‘Ā’isha al-Kutubī, “Khiṭāb al-Bābā Urbān al-Thānī (1089-1099) fī Majma‘ Clermont 27 Movember 1095 m. wa ‘Awāqibuhu” (MA thesis, Sharjah University, 2023).

⁶⁶ Munā Maḥmūd, “Kitāb al-Idrīsī *Nuzhat al-Mushtāq* Maṣḍaran li Bilād al-Shām ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya” (MA thesis, Sharjah University, 2023); Ḥalīma al-‘Affād, “Ma‘rakat Mānzikart 1071 m. wa Ḥaṭṭīn 1087 m. Dirāsa Muqārana” (MA thesis, Sharjah University, 2023).

⁶⁷ Ḥamad al-‘Alīlī, “Ma‘rakat Ḥaṭṭīn 1187 m. wa ‘Ayn Jālūt 1260 m. Dirāsa Muqārana” (MA thesis, Sharjah University, 2023).

⁶⁸ Ṭariq al-Zuhūrī, “Al-Dāfi‘ān al-Dīnī wa al-Iqtisādī li al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya mā bayn 1098 – 1204 m.” (MA thesis, Sharjah University, 2023).

⁶⁹ Najāḥ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Qābisī, “Ittijāhāt al-Baḥṭh fī Tārīkh al-Ghazw al-Ṣalībī”, *Majallat al-Mu‘arrikh al-‘Arabī*, vol. 15, no. 38 (1988), pp. 48-56.

which he devoted much attention to the Eighth Crusade in 1270 which was directed against the Hafsids.⁷⁰ An Algerian researcher, Kamāl bin Māris, completed his MA dissertation at ‘Ayn Shams University in Egypt under the supervision of Aḥmad Ramaḍān Aḥmad on “Regional Relations in the Time of the Crusades: Mosul and Aleppo” (1991). This work was published under the same title in Cairo in 2004.⁷¹ He has since created a school of research on the history of the Crusades and the Islamic Mashriq in Algeria at the University of Guelma where he currently teaches.

Conclusion

From the preceding bibliographical survey we can draw several conclusions. The Egyptian school of Crusade studies can be considered the “mother-school” with regards to modern Arab historians of the Crusades, beginning with Sayyid ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī whose pioneering history of the Crusades was published in 1899, followed by the great contribution of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyāda who established Crusade studies as a proper academic field.

The Iraqi school has played an important role in the study of a number of aspects of the Crusades, particularly the role of the Atabegs of Mosul in confronting the Crusaders. They have also given great attention to the study of the life and times of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī. The contribution of Saudi historians to the field was the result of the supervision by Egyptian medievalists working in the Saudi university system of a number of MA and PhD theses by Saudi historians focusing on various aspects of the period of the Crusades. These Saudi historians are now, in turn, training and supervising a new generation of Saudi specialists in the Crusades. In the Maghreb, academic interest in the Crusades was late in developing. In the case of Algeria, an Algerian historian trained in Egypt at ‘Ayn Shams University, Kamāl bin Māris, returned to his homeland and established a school of Crusade studies there.

There has been considerable interest in translating Western primary and secondary sources on the Crusades into Arabic. In this regard, we should note the contributions made by Al-Sayyid al-Bāz al-‘Arīnī, Ḥasan Ḥabashī, Qāsim

⁷⁰ Muḥammad al-‘Arūsī al-Muṭawī, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya fī al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1982); Idem, *Al-Ṣalṭana al-Ḥafṣīya* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1986).

⁷¹ Kamāl bin Māris, *Al-‘Alāqāt al-Iqlīmīya wa al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya: Al-Mawṣil wa Ḥalab* (Cairo: Al-‘Ayn li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Buḥūth, 2004).

‘Abduh Qāsim, Sa‘īd al-Bīshāwī, and Suhayl Zakkār. In particular, tens of European primary sources relevant to the Crusades have been translated into Arabic thanks above all to the efforts of Suhayl Zakkār and Ḥasan Ḥabashī. Indeed, the latter can be considered the pioneer of this process as he began translating such sources in the middle of the twentieth century.

Palestinian historians have played a major part in the study of the history of Palestine during the period of the Crusades. In particular, mention must be made of the outstanding role of Sa‘īd al-Bīshāwī who has contributed tremendously through his studies and his translations of European primary sources. He has focused especially on the translation of the works of medieval European visitors to the Holy Land. It is fair to consider Al-Bīshāwī the founder of the Palestinian school of Crusade studies.

Modern Arab historians are also giving attention to the compilation of bibliographic reference works on the Crusades and medieval history in general. I have personally contributed to this trend with my book *Chapters in the Bibliography of the Crusades* which appeared in 1996, and I have followed this with other studies on the topic. I was inspired to undertake this work by the encyclopedic bibliography of the history of the Crusades published by the German medievalist Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Bibliographie zur Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Hanover, 1960).

The preceding survey has also shown the important contributions made by female historians to Crusade studies in the Arab World. The women pioneers in this field were Egyptians such as Zubayda ‘Aṭā, ‘Alīya al-Janẓūrī, Laylā ‘Abd al-Jawād, Fathīya al-Nabrāwī, ‘Afāf Ṣabra, Āmāl Zayyān and others. Nor should we forget the important female Iraqi historians of the Crusades such as Maysūn al-‘Abābjī, and the female Saudi historians who have also made noteworthy contributions in recent years.

Finally, it is important to note here that all too often the work of Arab specialists in the history of the Crusades is uncoordinated, scattered, and unrecognized outside of the Arab World. For these reasons, it is imperative to establish a specialized center for Crusade studies in the Arab World in order to better coordinate the efforts of medieval historians in the various Arab countries and to promote the further advancement of the field.

Translated by Amar S. Baadj

THE FATIMIDS AND THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CRUSADES IN MODERN ARABIC HISTORICAL SCHOLARSHIP

MOHAMED RAHEEL*

Abstract

A major theme throughout the first seventy years of the Crusader presence in the Near East is that of war and diplomacy with the Fatimid caliphate of Cairo. The fact that the official ideology of the Fatimids was Ismā'īlī Shī'ism made them rivals of the Sunnī Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad and added a further complicating factor to the political history of the period. The subject of Crusader-Fatimid relations has attracted considerable interest among contemporary Arab researchers and this article will trace the general contours of the body of historical scholarship which has been produced by historians in the Arab World on the topic. In particular, we will consider the issue of how contemporary ideological and sectarian positions have crept into some treatments of this topic, and the struggle of maintaining historical objectivity and professional standards in the face of such external pressures. Selected works from the Egyptian, Iraqi, and Algerian schools of historiography will be analyzed as case studies.

Introduction

The subject of the Fatimids' relations with the Crusader principalities that were established by European invaders in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries A.D. has attracted the attention of modern Arab historians due to the fact that these entities were created on lands that the Fatimids had previously ruled, and as a consequence the Fatimids at first exerted considerable military effort to liberate these regions, though later on their

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policy changed to one of diplomatic relations with the Crusader states which reached the point of alliance in the 1160s. This aroused the resentment of the Zankids in Bilād al-Shām led by Nūr al-Dīn Zankī (541/1147 – 569/1174) whose deputies intervened in Egypt, established control over the country, and finally eliminated the Fatimid Caliphate in 567/1171.

In this paper we will evaluate and analyze the considerable body of modern Arabic historical scholarship concerning Fatimid-Crusader relations and we will also show that contemporary sectarian and political disputes have influenced some of these works. We suggest that these studies can be broadly divided into three categories: those that take a sectarian Sunnī position that is hostile to the Fatimids, those that take a sectarian Shīʿī position which is simultaneously apologetic in its treatment of the Fatimids while viewing Sunnī dynasties from the same period such as the Zankids in a negative light, and those studies that take an overall objective, critical stance and uphold the standards of professional historiography.

The modern Arabic studies connected with the theme of this paper had their beginning in Egypt at the hands of the founder of the Arab school of Crusade studies Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr who published an extensive study on the subject in 1969 which paved the way for other Arab researchers. Scholars from three Arab countries in particular have shown considerable interest in the topic of Fatimid-Crusader relations, namely Egypt, Iraq, and Algeria, though there have been individual contributions from other Arab countries as well such as Mauritania and Saudi Arabia.

In Egypt, ʿĀshūr was followed by Zaynab Abū ʿAlī, a professor at al-Azhar University, whose master's thesis concerned Fatimid relations with the Crusaders and delved into the topic in greater detail and with more sources than ʿĀshūr's study. Fāʿiz Najīb Iskandar studied the key battle of al-Bābayn (562/1167) in which the allied forces of the Crusaders and the Fatimids fought against the Zankid army in Egypt. It was this battle that marked the appearance of Yūsuf b. Ayyūb Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (564/1169 – 589/1193) on the stage of history, who would lead Muslim resistance to the Crusaders after the death of Nūr al-Dīn Zankī (541/1147 – 569/1174). The Iraqi and Algerian contributions to the subject of Fatimid-Crusader relations have sought to widen the scope of ʿĀshūr's initial foray into the subject, though they remain influenced by the Egyptian school.

Historical Background

The first Fatimid caliph, ‘Ubaydallāh al-Mahdī (297/909 – 322/934), established the Fatimid caliphate in Ifrīqīya in 296/909 with the city of al-Mahdīya as its capital. However, Al-Mahdī and his successors did not regard al-Mahdīya as the permanent capital of the new empire since in their view they were the rightful rulers of the entire Islamic World. In order to fulfill their mission, they needed to expand eastwards. Naturally their gaze fell upon Egypt, which, due to its plentiful resources, large population, and its strategic location, would afford the caliphate greater stability and a platform for further expansion into the Near East. To this end, the Fatimid caliphs expended great efforts which finally resulted in the conquest of Egypt in 358/969. The caliph Al-Mu‘izz li-Dīn Allāh (341/953 – 365/975) moved his residence to Egypt in 362/972, the same year that Cairo was built as the new capital, and from that date the destiny of the Fatimid Caliphate was bound to Egypt. In the following years the Fatimids expanded east to conquer Bilād al-Shām and the Ḥijāz. The height of Fatimid expansion in the east was briefly attained during the reign of the caliph Al-Mustaṣṣir (427/1036 – 487/1094) when a rebellious Abbasid commander, Arslān al-Basāsīrī, proclaimed the Fatimid *da‘wa* in Baghdad in 450/1058. This coincided with the arrival of the Sunnī Seljuk Turks who wrested Iraq and most of Syria from Fatimid control.

In 491/1098 the Crusaders entered northern Syria. At first the Fatimids did not realize the nature and goals of the Crusading movement and they entered into diplomatic correspondence with its leaders. However, as the Crusaders proceeded southwards their intentions became clear to the Fatimids. In 492/1099 they captured Jerusalem from the Fatimids and continued to advance through Palestine until only ‘Asqalān remained in Fatimid hands. This city was the site of several battles between the Fatimids and the Crusaders. The Fatimid Caliphate survived in Egypt until Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ayyūb (Saladin) abolished it in 567/1171, thus for 73 years it bordered the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem from the south. During this period numerous battles between the two sides occurred as well as diplomatic exchanges which reached the point of alliance.

The Egyptian School

The first scholar who shed light on the attitude of the Fatimid Caliphate towards the Crusaders was the pioneer of Crusade Studies in the Arab World, Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ ‘Āshūr (1922-2009) in his study entitled “The Character

of the Fatimid State During the Crusades” which was published in 1969. At the beginning of this work, ‘Āshūr referred to one of the main reasons for the success of the Crusading movement and its endurance for two centuries in the Near East, namely the struggle between the Sunnī camp led by the Abbasids and the Shī‘ī camp led by the Fatimids which hindered the formation of a unified Muslim front against the Crusaders.¹

‘Āshūr attempted to explain the reluctance of his predecessors to study the role played by the Fatimids in confronting the Crusaders. According to him, there were three reasons for this neglect: firstly because by the time the Crusaders arrived on the scene, the Fatimids were already in the period of their final decline, secondly because scholars were more interested in the history of Muslim resistance to the Crusades in northern Bilād al-Shām rather than in the southern part where the Fatimids were, and thirdly because Egypt itself only became a theater of Muslim-Crusader conflict at the very end of the Fatimid Caliphate, which led historians to consider this aspect of the Crusades a part of Ayyubid history rather than of Fatimid history.²

‘Āshūr sought to lift the veil from the factors that influenced Fatimid-Crusader relations of which the most important was the weakened condition of the Fatimid state as a result of internal conflicts between the various military contingents and between the important officials, especially the viziers who controlled access to the caliphs and prevented them from governing the state. A second factor was the mutual suspicion and distrust between the Shī‘ī Fatimids and the Sunnī Seljuks, especially in Damascus. This divided the attention of the Fatimids between monitoring the actions of the Seljuks and in equal measure those of the Crusaders. As a result, the Fatimid Caliphate was unable to play a role in the Islamic resistance to the Crusaders that was proportionate to its strength and strategic location. ‘Āshūr also notes that some of the Fatimid caliphs were not eager to completely expel the Crusaders from the Holy Land because they saw them as a firm buffer against the Seljuks. Finally, there was the nature of the Fatimid military expeditions against the Crusaders which were characterized by negligence and chaos in the Fatimid command structure, and which thereby led to missed opportunities on the battlefield.³

¹ Sa‘īd ‘Abd al-Fattāh ‘Āshūr, “Shakhṣiyat al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya fī al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībiya”, *Al-Majalla al-Tārīkhīya al-Miṣrīya*, vol. 16, no. 16 (1969): 15.

² ‘Āshūr, “Shakhṣiyat al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya”, 17-18.

³ ‘Āshūr, “Shakhṣiyat al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya”, pp. 18-19.

‘Āshūr also remarked on the negative influence of the bloodshed within Fatimid ranks which even drew the blood of the caliphs themselves, particularly in the middle of the sixth century A.H./twelfth century A.D. when, for example, the Fatimid vizier ‘Abbās b. Abī al-Futūḥ (548/1153 – 549/1154) and his son were involved in the murder of the caliph Al-Zāfir (544/1149 – 549/1154). This was apart from the struggle among the powerful commanders over the office of vizier, the most notable example of which was the struggle between Shāwar (557/1162, 559/1164 – 564/1169) and Ḍirghām (558/1163 – 559/1164) which opened the door to direct Crusader interference in the internal affairs of the Fatimid state, thereby prompting the intervention of the amir Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Zankī, who ruled over northern Syria and the Jazīra, through his vassals the Ayyubids under their leader Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh (d. 564/1169) in 559/1164, and the subsequent struggle between Shīrkūh and the Crusaders for the domination of Egypt. The final result of this contest was the expulsion of the Crusaders from Egypt, the abolition of the Fatimid Caliphate by Shīrkūh’s nephew and successor Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in 567/1171, and the nominal unification of Egypt with a portion of Syria under Nūr al-Dīn Zankī.⁴

While the Sunnī-Shī‘ī conflict was one of the factors that enabled the long presence of the Crusaders in the Near East, the absence of trust between the Byzantines and the Crusaders was a major reason for the inability of the Christian powers to halt the *jihād* movement led by Nūr al-Dīn Zankī. This was apparent in the failure of the joint Byzantine-Crusader assault on Damietta in 564/1169 which confirmed Zankid control over Egypt and paved the way for Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to peacefully abolish the Fatimid Caliphate by replacing the name of the last Fatimid caliph Al-‘Āḍid (555/1160 – 567/1171) with that of the Abbasid caliph Al-Mustaḍī (566/1170 – 575/1180), a move that did not provoke any popular resistance.⁵

‘Āshūr’s pioneering study encouraged other researchers in the Arab World to devote attention to the topic of Fatimid-Crusader relations. Zaynab Abū ‘Alī, now a professor of medieval history at Al-Azhar University, wrote her MA thesis on “The Role of the Fatimid State in the Crusades” at the urging of her supervisor, the medievalist ‘Afāf Ṣabra, herself a pupil of ‘Āshūr.⁶ Indeed, ‘Āshūr himself was consulted by Zaynab Abū ‘Alī during the

⁴ ‘Āshūr, “Shakhṣiyat al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya”, pp. 45-46.

⁵ ‘Āshūr, “Shakhṣiyat al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya”, 61-66.

⁶ Zaynab Abū ‘Alī, “Dawr al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya fī al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya”, MA dissertation, Al-Azhar University, 1993.

preparation of her dissertation due to his expertise on the topic. The thesis begins with a survey of the condition of the Muslim powers at the moment of the Crusaders' arrival in the Levant, followed by a discussion of the Fatimids' reaction to the First Crusade and their attempts to defend the Syrian ports from the Crusaders. Then the thesis takes up the Crusaders' campaigns against Fatimid Egypt until the expulsion of the Crusaders from Egypt by the Zankid expeditionary force and the abolition of the Fatimid Caliphate. Abū 'Alī takes a balanced view of the Fatimids' position towards the Crusaders, showing that they resisted the latter with tenacity and shedding light on their repeated attempts to save many cities in Bilād al-Shām from falling into the Crusaders' hands. She also sheds light on a number of the smaller Islamic principalities that existed in this period such as the Banū Mazyad of al-Ḥilla in Iraq.⁷ She notes the determination of the Crusaders from their first appearance in Palestine to conquer Egypt, and as a curious aside, she mentions that after King Baldwin I of Jerusalem (1100 – 1118) died while on campaign in Egypt in 1118 A.D. and was carried back to Jerusalem for burial, the Egyptians named a lake in the northern part of the country Lake Bardawīl, in memory of his presence there. Finally, she also studies the relations and tensions between Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī, who became commander of the Zankid expeditionary force in Egypt following the death of his uncle Shīrkūh in 564/1169, and his nominal overlord Nūr al-Dīn Zankī until the death of the latter in 569/1174.⁸

In comparison to 'Āshūr, Abū 'Alī uses a greater number of primary sources and modern studies, both Arab and Western, in her study of Fatimid-Crusader relations. This may be due to the great time gap between the appearance of both studies, since 'Ashūr's article was published in 1969 and Abū 'Alī's thesis appeared in 1993. During the interval between these two studies, many Arabic and Latin primary sources were edited and published and the academic field of Crusade studies grew significantly resulting in numerous articles, monographs, and other studies on all aspects of the Crusades. As a result, Abū 'Alī was able to benefit from a larger and more varied bibliography than 'Āshūr had when he published his pioneering study.

Fā'iz Najīb Iskandar, professor of medieval history at the University of Banhā in Egypt, has also devoted attention to the struggle between the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem and the Zankid Sultanate for control of Egypt

⁷ Abū 'Alī, "Dawr al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya", pp. 3-5.

⁸ Abū 'Alī, "Dawr al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya", p. 13.

during the last years of the Fatimid Caliphate. He has produced a study on the fateful battle of Al-Bābayn (562/1167) in the modern Egyptian governorate of Al-Minyā, between the Ayyubids under Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh (who were then still vassals of the Zankids) and a combined Crusader-Fatimid force under the Fatimid vizier Shāwar and the King of Jerusalem, Amalric I (1163 – 1174).⁹ Despite being outnumbered and low on supplies, Shīrkūh and his nephew Ṣalāh al-Dīn led the Ayyubids to victory. Though the battle was not decisive, it enabled Shīrkūh to swiftly advance northwards and temporarily occupy Alexandria where he left Ṣalāh al-Dīn in charge with a garrison while he returned to Syria with the bulk of the Zankid army.

One of the strengths of Iskandar's study is his extensive use of medieval European primary sources, as well as the classical Arabic sources and modern scholarship, both Arab and Western. He made good use of his mastery of French, both medieval and modern, as well as English. Among the most important medieval sources used by Iskandar is William of Tyre's (d. 1186) *History of Deeds Done Beyond the Seas*. Iskandar corrected William of Tyre's false assumption that Shīrkūh was in direct contact with the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad and that he even visited the latter at his court to seek men and money for his expedition to Egypt and that the caliph wrote to all corners of the Islamic world requesting reinforcements for Shīrkūh.¹⁰ Iskandar also highlighted the courage and endurance of Shīrkūh, as for instance when in 562/1167 he took a difficult inland route through the Sinai Peninsula in order to avoid interception by ship-borne Crusader forces.¹¹ This route left Shīrkūh and his soldiers exposed to sandstorms and the loss of their animals, and the men themselves would all have perished if not for the skill of Shīrkūh who led them out of the Sinai Desert with minimal losses so that they appeared suddenly at Aṭṭīh, only 70 kilometers south of Cairo. This bold feat prompted the Fatimid vizier Shāwar to appeal to King Amalric of Jerusalem for assistance. The latter eagerly responded, motivated both by the wealth of Egypt and by fear for the fate of the Crusaders if the Zankids succeeded in opening a southern front against them in Egypt.¹²

⁹ Fā'iz Najīb Iskandar, "Al-Ṣalībīyūn wa al-Fāṭimīyūn wa al-Zankīyūn fī Ma'rakat al-Bābayn", *Majallat Kullīyat al-Ādāb*, University of Al-Minyā, vol. 42, no. 2 (2003): 79-107.

¹⁰ Iskandar, "Al-Ṣalībīyūn wa al-Fāṭimīyūn", p. 80.

¹¹ Iskandar, "Al-Ṣalībīyūn wa al-Fāṭimīyūn", pp. 82-83.

¹² Iskandar, "Al-Ṣalībīyūn wa al-Fāṭimīyūn", p. 106.

‘Ālā’ Ṭāḥā Rizq wrote a study on “The Necessity of Egyptian-Syrian Unity in Light of the Crusader-Byzantine Assault on Damietta in 1169 A.D.”.¹³ This battle followed the establishment of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as vizier of the last Fatimid caliph, Al-‘Āḍid, in the spring of 564/1169, which greatly alarmed the Crusaders who agreed with the Byzantines to launch an expedition against Egypt. However, the mutual distrust between the Crusaders and Byzantines, the steadfastness of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the support of the Fatimid caliph, and Nūr al-Dīn Zankī’s relentless attacks on the Crusaders’ territories in Syria, forced King Amalric to break off the siege of Damietta. Rizq affirms that the results of this failed campaign were the very opposite of the Crusaders’ goals, for not only did they fail to occupy Egypt and benefit from its wealth, but their invasion of Egypt encouraged greater unity among the Muslims and a transformation of their military posture from a defensive one to an offensive one.¹⁴ It is apparent from Rizq’s study that the joint Byzantine-Crusader campaign against Damietta was a desperate response to the Zankid victory over the Crusaders in Egypt and an attempt to salvage their position in the country. Rizq shows that the Christian military orders played an increasingly important role in the Crusader expeditions as exemplified by the grand master of the Hospitallers, Gilbert of Assailly, who encouraged Amalric to invade Egypt in the hope of acquiring booty the likes of which had been taken after the sack of Bilbays in the eastern Delta in 564/1168.¹⁵

Rizq insisted on his preconceived notion of the treachery of the last Fatimid caliph Al-‘Āḍid, making him equally culpable with the deceitful vizier Shāwar. The latter played every side against each other in order to come out the winner, until he finally fell victim to his own plotting and double dealing and was executed by strangulation. In fact, Al-‘Āḍid was completely powerless and he could do no more than send messengers asking for help from Nūr al-Dīn Zankī in 562/1167. Had the hapless caliph possessed any real political power, then he would not have been a plaything in the hands of the viziers Shāwar and Ḍirghām, nor would he have permitted Shāwar to open the doors to direct foreign intervention in the affairs of Egypt.¹⁶ Finally, we should note that Rizq insists on the security dimension with frequent use of

¹³ ‘Ālā’ Ṭāḥā Rizq, “Ḥatmīyat al-Waḥda bayna Miṣr wa al-Shām fī Ḍaw’ Aḥdāth al-Ḥamla al-Ṣalībīya al-Bīzanṭīya ‘alā Dumyāt 1169 m.”, *Majallat Kullīyat al-Ādāb*, Maṣūra University, vol. 34, no. 34 (2004): 551-578.

¹⁴ Rizq, “Ḥatmīyat al-Waḥda”, p. 553.

¹⁵ Rizq, “Ḥatmīyat al-Waḥda”, p. 554.

¹⁶ Rizq, “Ḥatmīyat al-Waḥda”, p. 555.

terms such as “Arab security” and “Islamic security” and he also harshly criticizes the Fatimids. These aspects are not surprising when we learn that Rizq had a military background before he began his university career which no doubt influenced his academic output along with a deep attachment to the Sunnī sect of Islam and strong patriotic sentiment towards Egypt.

Ḥijāzī ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Sulaymān (d. 2020) has studied one of the most important contemporary sources for the Zankid-Crusader conflict in Egypt, the works of the poet ‘Umāra al-Yamanī (d. 569/1174) in an article entitled “Observations on the Historical Writings of ‘Umāra al-Yamanī”.¹⁷ ‘Umāra was involved in a plot against Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn that attempted to restore the Fatimids to power with the aid of a Crusader invasion of Egypt. The conspiracy was uncovered before it could be launched and ‘Umāra was executed along with the other plotters. What distinguishes the historical references in ‘Umāra’s works is that he conveyed the official Fatimid point of view during the period when the Fatimid state was in its death throes, oscillating between hatred of the Crusaders and reluctant alliance with them in order to stave off the Zankid threat from Syria.

Despite the importance of ‘Umāra’s role in the events of the late Fatimid period and the value of his writings, his works provide limited details. Ḥijāzī seeks to be neutral as far as possible in his evaluation of ‘Umāra given the contradiction between ‘Umāra’s profession of the Sunnī creed while giving his loyalty to the Shī‘ī Fatimids and his treacherous behavior towards Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, actions for which many historians have criticized him. Ḥijāzī notes the varied sources upon which ‘Umāra depended. These included oral reports which he had access to due to his closeness to the centers of decision-making in the Fatimid court. Indeed not only was ‘Umāra a recorder of history but he also participated directly in the political affairs of his time and he traveled widely throughout Egypt gaining access to many useful sources of information.¹⁸ Ḥijāzī notes some of the defects in ‘Umāra’s accounts, for example his habit of confusing the Byzantines or *Rūm* with the Crusaders and his purposeful omission of information on Shīrkūh and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn whom he resented for their role in causing the downfall of the Fatimids. Despite his aversion to mentioning Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, ‘Umāra did record the Crusader-Byzantine assault on Damietta in 564/1169.

¹⁷ Ḥijāzī ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Sulaymān, “Mulāḥazāt ‘alā al-Kitāba al-Tārīkhīya ‘inda ‘Umāra al-Yamanī”, *Ḥawliyat Siminār al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī*, Al-Jam‘iyat al-Miṣrīya li al-Dirāsāt al-Tārīkhīya, vol. 4, no. 4 (2014): 283-319.

¹⁸ Sulaymān, “Mulāḥazāt ‘alā al-Kitāba al-Tārīkhīya”, pp. 287-288.

Hijāzī observes that ‘Umāra accompanied each of his historical accounts with lines of poetry describing the events mentioned in the preceding narrative, a testimony to his poetic background and love of literature.¹⁹ In a succinct verse ‘Umāra exhibited his poetic genius and ability to encapsulate the tragedy of the final decline of the Fatimid Caliphate under its last viziers: “No one trained the Fatimids’ officials as Al-Ṣāliḥ Ruzzayk trained them, no one exterminated so many of their nobles as Ḍirghām did, and no one squandered the wealth of the Fatimids like Shāwar and his family”.²⁰

‘Umāra al-Yamanī is also the subject of a study by the Kuwaiti scholar Musā‘id Jābir al-‘Anzī entitled “The Relation of a Man of Letters to Authority in the Late Fatimid and Early Ayyubid Period: the Case of ‘Umāra al-Yamanī”.²¹ This study attempts to explain ‘Umāra’s obstinate hostility towards Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, even though they both adhered to the same religious sect, along with his unwavering loyalty towards the Fatimids and adoption of all of their positions, even that of alliance with the Crusaders. Al-‘Anzī notes that ‘Umāra’s attitude towards Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and the Zankids underwent a reversal, for initially he praised Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn along with his father and his brothers in the hope of receiving largesse from him. However, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn disappointed him in this regard, perhaps because he had misgivings about ‘Umāra’s well-known affection and nostalgia for the Fatimids. Al-‘Anzī also sheds light on another factor that may have driven the poet’s hostility towards Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, that of ethnicity, for ‘Umāra was of Arab stock like the Fatimid caliphs while Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and the Ayyubids were Kurds. He notes the following verse: “Their sect in generosity is that of habitude [*sunna*] even if they differ with me in their profession of Shī‘ism”.²²

Though this theory is attractive, I do not find it convincing because it ignores the reality that during the Middle Ages religious and sectarian affiliation was usually more important than ethnicity, after all the great

¹⁹ Sulaymān, “Mulāḥazāt ‘alā al-Kitāba al-Tārīkhīya”, p. 296.

²⁰ Sulaymān, “Mulāḥazāt ‘alā al-Kitāba al-Tārīkhīya”, p. 298; Najm al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad ‘Umāra b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥakamī al-Yamanī (known as ‘Umāra al-Yamanī), *Al-Nukat al-‘Aṣrīya fī ‘Akhbār al-Wuzarā’ al-Miṣrīya*, ed. H. Derenbourg (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1968) p. 88. Al-Ṣāliḥ Ruzzayk held the vizierate from 549/1154 until his murder in 556/1161. He was known as a capable vizier and a great patron of learning.

²¹ Musā‘id Jābir al-‘Anzī, “Mawqif al-Muthaqqaf min al-Sulṭa fī Awākhir al-‘Aṣr al-Fāṭimī wa Bawākīr al-‘Aṣr al-Ayyūbī: ‘Umāra al-Yamanī Anmūdḥajan”, *Ḥawliyat Kulliyat al-‘Ādāb*, ‘Ayn Shams University, vol. 50, no. 15 (2022): 27-47.

²² Al-‘Anzī, “Mawqif al-Muthaqqaf”, p. 40; ‘Umāra al-Yamanī, *Nukat*, p. 288.

historian Will Durant called the medieval period “The Age of Faith”. It seems more likely to me that ‘Umāra was motivated by pure personal interest in his attachment to the Fatimids.

The subject of Fatimid-Crusader relations has remained a focus of attention for Egyptian historians even now in 2023 as we can surmise from Maḥmūd ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Amīn’s article “The Embassies Exchanged between the Fatimids and the Crusaders in Syria”.²³ Amīn is concerned with the use of diplomacy as a means of communication and understanding between Crusaders and Fatimids through which each party sought its own interests in the hope of emerging with the greatest gain at the smallest cost. This article shows that diplomatic contacts between the two sides began the moment the Crusaders set foot in the Levant and continued until the last years of the caliphate when the Crusaders managed to interfere directly in the quarrels between Fatimid viziers. Amīn makes clear the shortsightedness and lack of understanding on the part of the Fatimid vizier Al-Afḍal (487/1094 – 515/1121), who was the first Fatimid statesman to correspond with the Crusaders, when he proposed to them the division of Syria. This shows that the Fatimids had poor intelligence about the Crusaders and their intentions and it indicated to the Crusaders’ leadership the ease with which they could divide the Muslim powers.

Among the reasons behind the lack of understanding of the nature of the Crusading movement by the Fatimids are, according to Amīn, the fact that the Fatimid caliphs no longer had political power but had become mere playthings in the hands of their viziers, and secondly, a naïve and short-sighted belief that the Crusaders could be used against the Seljuks. Nonetheless, the embassy of Al-Afḍal failed once the Crusaders revealed their intention to conquer the entire Levant and take Jerusalem by the sword, rejecting the Fatimid proposal that they enter Jerusalem as peaceful pilgrims.²⁴

Diplomatic relations between the Fatimids and Crusaders were cut off until Shāwar corresponded with the Crusaders in 559/1164 seeking their assistance in expelling the Zankid forces from Egypt. He wrote to them a second time in 562/1167 when the Zankids were on the verge of invading Egypt again, and a third time in 564/1168 seeking a defensive alliance with the Crusaders which was signed in Cairo with the reluctant compliance of the

²³ Maḥmūd ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Amīn, “Al-Sifārāt bayn al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya wa al-Ṣalībiyīn fi al-Shām”, *Sūbak li al-Dirāsāt al-Tārikhiya wa al-Ḥaḍāriya*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2023): 109-133.

²⁴ Amīn, “Al-Sifārāt bayn al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya”, pp. 109-121.

caliph Al-‘Āḍid, who had no power to refuse the wishes of his vizier. Despite the brevity of the study and its need for further explanation and elaboration of the embassies themselves as well as the period in which there were no diplomatic relations between the two sides, along with its need for a more complete bibliography both of the primary sources and modern studies, Amīn’s article is still of importance in studying the attitudes of the Fatimids towards the Crusades in general, and it will no doubt encourage other researchers to explore the topic further and in greater detail.

The Iraqi School

The Iraqi historian Ḥusayn Ḥadīth Jāsīm has written a more precise article entitled “An Assessment of the Decision by the Fatimid Caliph Al-‘Āḍid li Dīn Allāh to invite the Forces of Nūr al-Dīn into Egypt”.²⁵ The aim of his study is to evaluate the measure taken by the caliph Al-‘Āḍid in 564/1168 of requesting from Nūr al-Dīn Zankī the dispatch of a third Zankid expeditionary force to Egypt in order to expel the Crusaders from the land, which had suffered greatly from the depredations of the Crusaders after the Zankid forces had evacuated Egypt for the second time in 562/1167. He begins with a discussion of the reasons for the Crusader-Zankid contest over the control of Egypt, noting Egypt’s strategic importance due to its location, its great wealth, and large population, all factors that would give a decisive advantage to the party that managed to occupy it. The weakness of the Fatimid Caliphate during this period meant that there was no force within Egypt itself capable of resisting external intervention. The caliphs were mere puppets in the hands of their viziers, and the vizierate itself was the object of constant conflicts between rival commanders and factions, best exemplified by the struggle between the two military commanders Ḍirghām and Shāwar for control of the vizierate, which opened the door to foreign intervention.

The humiliating terms from the Crusaders which Shāwar had agreed to in 562/1167 added insult to injury. The hapless young caliph was forced by his all-powerful vizier to assent to the presence of a Crusader garrison in Cairo and to accept the flagrant breach of court protocol by the Crusader envoy Hugh of Caesarea who demanded to shake the caliph’s ungloved hand. Jāsīm believes that these circumstances drove the caliph to appeal for help from Nūr

²⁵ Ḥusayn Ḥadīth Jāsīm, “Dirāsa Taqwīmīya li Qarrār al-Khalīfa al-Fāṭimī al-‘Āḍid li Dīn Allāh bi Istid‘ā’ Quwwāt Nūr al-Dīn ilā Miṣr”, *Majallat Jāmi‘at Takrīt li al-‘Ulūm al-Insānīya* vol. 17, no. 8 (2010).

al-Dīn Zankī, who was after all still a fellow Muslim prince despite the difference in sect. This action supposedly caused Shāwar to rebuke the caliph, who is reported to have replied that he preferred that Egypt remain Muslim rather than become a vassal of the Crusaders, even if it would cost him his throne.²⁶ His appeal to Nūr al-Dīn brought about the desired intervention which ultimately expelled the Crusaders from Egypt. Jāsīm argues that the decision of Al-‘Āḍid to overlook sectarian differences and appeal to the Sunnī ruler Nūr al-Dīn for aid in evicting the Crusaders from Egypt, even while cognizant of the long-term threat the Zankids posed to the continuation of his own dynasty, had a positive influence on the course of Muslim resistance to the Crusader project in the Near East.²⁷

In 2016, Ra‘d Yūnus ‘Abbās published an article on “The Fatimids and the First Crusade”.²⁸ He begins with a look at the factors which paved the way for the invasion of the Levant by the Crusaders. He notes the role of the Byzantines as intermediaries between the Fatimids and the Crusaders, a factor which he suggests may have contributed to the Fatimids’ initial failure to understand the nature and true aims of the Crusaders, though these became all too apparent after the failure of all attempts at negotiating with the Crusaders. He also examines the military response of the Fatimids, noting some successes but remarking that these were mitigated by the weakness of the caliphs and the incessant internal conflicts within the Fatimid state. He notes that paradoxically, the smaller military expeditions launched by the Fatimids were more successful than the large expeditions that were preceded by extensive preparations.²⁹

A study by Muḥammad Kāzīm al-Rubay‘ī pays particular attention to Shāwar whom he believes played a pivotal role in events and to whom he assigns the greatest blame for the downfall of the Fatimid state.³⁰ This study focuses on the struggle over the vizierate which produced personalities who were incessantly in conflict with one another, seeking their personal interests while ignoring completely the welfare of the Fatimid state and the defense of the Islamic lands from the Crusaders. Shāwar played a double game for his

²⁶ Jāsīm, “Dirāsa Taqwīmīya”, p. 494.

²⁷ Jāsīm, “Dirāsa Taqwīmīya”, p. 496.

²⁸ Ra‘d Yūnus ‘Abbās, “Al-Fāṭimīyūn wa al-Ḥamlat al-Ṣalībīya al-Ūlā”, *Majallat Kullīyat al-Tarbīya al-Asāsīya*, vol. 22, no. 93 (2016): 70-92.

²⁹ ‘Abbās, “Al-Fāṭimīyūn wa al-Ḥamlat al-Ṣalībīya”, p. 469.

³⁰ Muḥammad Kāzīm al-Rubay‘ī, “Al-Wazīr Shāwar wa Dawruhu fī Isqāṭ al-Dawlat al-Fāṭimīya”, *Majallat Abḥāth Maysān* vol. 13, no. 25 (2017): 70-92.

personal gain, siding at times with the Zankids and at times with the Crusaders, and the victim of his actions was the Fatimid Caliphate which, intentionally or not, he played a large part in destroying. Nonetheless, Shāwar's son Al-Kāmil contradicted his father's positions, for he advocated the idea of Islamic unity in the face of the Crusaders and favored alliance with the Zankids against them. Indeed he openly opposed his father's attempt to ally with the Crusaders after Shīrkūh's third expedition against Egypt in 564/1169. He made the following famous remark recorded by Al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) in his history of the Fatimid dynasty entitled *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā'*: "If we are to be killed it is better that we are killed as Muslims while the country is ruled by Muslims than to be killed with the country in the hands of the Franks".³¹ Al-Rubay'ī notes that although both Shīrkūh and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn served the Zankid state as its deputies in Egypt, there was talk in secret amongst them and their companions about creating an independent Ayyubid state in Egypt.

Jāsim Muḥammad 'Abbās has made Nūr al-Dīn's attempts to unite Egypt and Syria the focus of two studies published in 2021. The first of these entitled "The Influence of the Crusader Attacks on the Extension of Zankid Power into Egypt" is concerned with the Crusader designs on Egypt which motivated Nūr al-Dīn Zankī to intervene in that country so as to prevent it from falling into the Crusader camp.³² He also saw it as an opportunity to gain favor with the Abbasid caliph who desired to place the entire Islamic world under his spiritual authority. This is revealed in a letter preserved by the historian Abū Shāma (d. 665/1267) from the Abbasid caliph Al-Mustaḍī' (566/1170 – 575/1180): "It is necessary to strive for this goal in order to enjoy the great blessing and noble virtue, before the onslaught of death and the intervention of distance, especially because the *imām* of the age eagerly desires it, and it is his greatest hope".³³ Afterwards Nūr al-Dīn Zankī enjoined his deputy Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to bring this hope to fruition following the latter's appointment as

³¹ al-Rubay'ī, "Al-Wazīr Shāwar wa Dawruhu", p. 83; Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Itti'āz al-Ḥunafā' bi Akhbār Al-'Immat al-Fāṭimīyīn al-Khulafā'*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥilmī Muḥammad Aḥmad, 3 vols. (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-'Āmma li Quṣūr al-Thaqāfa, 1999) vol. 3, p. 300.

³² Jāsim Muḥammad 'Abbās, "Athar al-Hajamāt al-Ṣalībīya fī Baṣṭ al-Nufūdh al-Zankī 'alā Miṣr" *Majallat Kulliyat al-Tarbīya*, Jāmi'at Wāsiṭ, vol. 42, no. 2 (2022): 165-176,

³³ Shihāb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Ibrāhīm al-Dimashqī (known as Abū Shāma), *Al-Rawḍatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn al-Nūrīya wa al-Ṣalāḥīya*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Zabīq, 5 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1997) vol. 2, p. 152.

vizier of the Fatimids and the execution of Shāwar. This gained him the support of the Abbasid caliph and renown throughout the Islamic World.³⁴

‘Abbās’ second article published in 2021 is entitled “The Political Use of the Egyptian Military Expeditions of Nūr al-Dīn Zankī in Order to Realize the Zankid-Ayyubid Project in Egypt” and it complements the first article.³⁵ It aims to explain how Shīrkūh and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn transformed the Zankid project of putting an end to the Fatimid state and uniting Egypt with Syria in order to gain a strategic advantage over the Crusaders into an attempt to found an independent Ayyubid state based in Egypt. As proof of Shīrkūh’s independent political ambitions he mentions the fact that Shīrkūh accepted the office of vizier from the Fatimids in early 564/1169 without consulting Nūr al-Dīn Zankī and that Nūr al-Dīn wrote to the Fatimid caliph Al-‘Āḍid complaining about this but he was nevertheless unable to prevent Shīrkūh’s appointment to the vizierate.³⁶ Furthermore, he argues that Nūr al-Dīn Zankī was also opposed to the idea of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn assuming the Fatimid vizierate later in that same year following the death of his uncle Shīrkūh, however, in the end, Nūr al-Dīn acquiesced because he believed that it would be a dangerous and complicated affair to abolish the Fatimid caliphate and that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was the only one of his subordinates who could manage the task. ‘Abbās also claims that realpolitik trumped religious sentiment in the Islamic states during the period of the Crusades, particularly in what was left of the Abbasid Caliphate, and he does not believe that the Abbasid caliphs tried to play a unifying role among the Muslims during this period, citing as evidence the Abbasid caliph Al-Mustaḍī’s insistence on ending the rival Fatimid Caliphate.³⁷ It should be noted that this is an opinion shared by other researchers sympathetic to the Shī‘ī position.

The Iraqi historian Nāṣir al-Mullā Jāsīm and his pupil Muḥammad ‘Ubaysh have written a study on “The Struggle between Nūr al-Dīn Zankī and the Crusader King Amalric I for Control of Egypt in the Contemporary

³⁴ ‘Abbās, “Athar”, p. 173.

³⁵ Jāsīm Muḥammad ‘Abbās, “Al-Tawẓīf al-Siyāsī li Ḥamlāt al-Malik Nūr al-Dīn Zankī al-‘Askariya ‘alā Miṣr li Taḥqīq al-Mashrū‘ al-Zankī al-Ayyūbī fihā”, *Majallat Kulliyat al-Imām al-Kāzim*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2021): 309-329.

³⁶ ‘Abbās, “Al-Tawẓīf al-Siyāsī”, p. 316.

³⁷ ‘Abbās, “Al-Tawẓīf al-Siyāsī”, p. 319.

capture of Jerusalem by the Fatimids from the Seljuks one year earlier in 1098 was the result of a secret agreement between the Fatimids and Crusaders in order to distract the Seljuks. Kuraybī's work shows a strong bias against the Fatimids, whom he blames for the failure of Muslim resistance to the First Crusade, based in part on the following improbable account from the chronicler Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233): "When the 'Alawite rulers of Egypt saw the strength of the Seljuks and their conquest of Bilād al-Shām as far as Gaza, and that there was no other province remaining between the Seljuks and Fatimids, and thus nothing to prevent Aq̄sīs⁴³ from entering and occupying Egypt, they grew afraid and wrote to the Franks calling upon them to invade Bilād al-Shām and divide it with the Muslims, and God knows best!".⁴⁴ Finally, Kuraybī claims that the Fatimid expeditions against the coastal cities of Bilād al-Shām, especially under the vizier Al-Afḍal, were merely for show in order to assuage public opinion in Egypt and that these campaigns were neither serious nor did they result in any positive result militarily.⁴⁵

Two Algerian researchers, 'Ā'isha Tāzī and Fāṭima al-Zahrā' 'Ammāra, published a study on the same subject entitled "The Role of the Shī'a in the Fall of Jerusalem During the Crusades".⁴⁶ Their article centers around the Fatimids' position towards the First Crusade and in it they attempt to place the blame solely on the Fatimids for facilitating the occupation of Jerusalem by the Crusaders without objectively considering the many inter-related factors that produce a historical event. They both agree with Khālīd Kuraybī that there was a secret agreement between the Fatimids and Crusaders which encouraged the entry of the latter into the Levant, again relying on the passage from Ibn al-Athīr's history quoted above.⁴⁷ Such a view holds no merit since the contemporary sources make it clear that the Fatimids did not understand who the Crusaders were when they first appeared in the Near East, and that they initially thought that the Crusaders were Byzantines or Byzantine mercenaries who had no intention of advancing beyond Antioch, which was

⁴³ Aq̄sīs, also known as Atsiz, was the Turcoman ruler of Damascus and Jerusalem in the middle to late 1070s. He was executed in 472/1079.

⁴⁴ Kuraybī, "Mawqif al-Fāṭimīyīn", p. 420; 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. Abū al-Fidā' 'Abdallāh al-Qāḍī, 11 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīya, 1987) vol. 9, pp. 13-14.

⁴⁵ Kuraybī, "Mawqif al-Fāṭimīyīn", p. 427.

⁴⁶ 'Ā'isha Tāzī and Fāṭima al-Zahrā' 'Ammāra, "Dawr al-Shī'a fī Suqūṭ bayt al-Maqdis Zaman al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya", *Al-Akādīmīya li al-Dirāsāt al-Ijtimā'īya wa al-Insānīya*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2022): 128-136.

⁴⁷ 'Tāzī and 'Ammāra, "Dawr al-Shī'a", p. 128.

the usual frontier between Byzantine and Muslim-controlled territory. They did not understand the motivations and intentions of the Crusaders, and the capture of Jerusalem by the latter came as a shock to the Fatimids, who nonetheless resisted the Crusader advance militarily. The two co-authors support their theory by pointing out that the Ismā'īlī splinter-sect of the Nizārīs carried out the assassination of some of the Muslim leaders during the Crusades, implying that the Nizārī Ismā'īlīs were allies of the Crusaders, but in fact they also assassinated prominent Crusaders and thus the Nizārīs should be seen as having acted in their own self-interest after they split from the Fatimids in 487/1094 and not as allies of any particular state.⁴⁸

The same subject has also been addressed by Ḥamza Qādirī in his study entitled "The Development of the Fatimid Position towards the Crusader Presence in the Shadow of the Sectarian Relations between the Muslim Powers: 1096-1121 A.D."⁴⁹ As the title indicates, this study focuses on the early period of the Crusader invasions and on the attempts by the Fatimids to reach an understanding with other Muslim powers in order to put a stop to the Crusader expansion after their initial misreading of the Crusaders' intentions. The author asks an important question, which perhaps lies at the heart of the difference in approach between the historians from the eastern and western halves of the Arab World concerning Fatimid-Crusader relations: did the Fatimids play a role in the success of the First Crusade or is this merely a baseless accusation?⁵⁰ After a careful investigation of the sources, Qādirī arrives at the same conclusion made by 'Āshūr and the Egyptian school long ago, namely that the Fatimids did not understand the nature of the Crusades in the beginning, but after confirming the hostile intentions of the European invaders they fought against them.⁵¹

Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen that the topic of Fatimid-Crusader relations has attracted considerable attention from historians across the Arab world. In these studies three main approaches are found. The first is an objective

⁴⁸ 'Tāzī and 'Ammāra, "Dawr al-Shī'a", p. 134.

⁴⁹ Ḥamza Qādirī, "Taṭawwur Al-Mawqif al-Fāṭimī min al-Wujūd al-Ṣalībī fī Ḍill al-Tajādhubāt al-Madhhabīya bayn al-Qiwā al-Islāmīya 1096-1121 m.", *Majallat Dirāsāt*, Algeria, vol. 13, no. 2 (2022): 73-101.

⁵⁰ Qādirī, "Taṭawwur Al-Mawqif", p. 78.

⁵¹ Qādirī, "Taṭawwur Al-Mawqif", p. 95.

approach based on the primary sources which attempts to arrive as close as possible to the historical truth, and it is represented by the scholarship of the Egyptian school as well as that of some other researchers in the Maghreb and in the Arab East. The second approach starts from the assumption that the Fatimids were responsible for the failure of Muslim resistance to the First Crusade, and some of its adherents go as far as accusing the Fatimids of having had a secret alliance with the Crusaders against the Sunnī Muslim powers. This point of view has been advanced by some historians in the countries of the Maghreb. The third school of thought completely rejects the notion that the Fatimids played a role in weakening the Seljuk resistance to the Crusaders, and furthermore its proponents claim that the Sunnī powers neglected the struggle against the Crusaders in order to fight the Shī'ī Fatimids, rather than choosing cooperation with the Fatimids to expel the Crusaders from the Levant. They level this accusation in particular towards the Zankids.

The second and third approaches mentioned above are indicative of the influence of sectarian Sunnī and sectarian Shī'ī perspectives, respectively, on some contemporary Arab historical writing. It should go without saying that professional historians must not allow their personal religious prejudices to dictate how they write history and that they must do their utmost to avoid the trap of historical anachronism which occurs when one reads the history of the Middle Ages from the standpoint of twenty-first century political concerns rather than trying to understand the past on its own terms.

Translated by Amar S. Baadj

CONCEPTIONS OF THE CRUSADES IN THE SAUDI HISTORIOGRAPHICAL IMAGINATION: THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT OF UMM AL-QURĀ UNIVERSITY AS A CASE STUDY

AMRO ABDELAZIZ MOUNIR*

Abstract

This contribution is concerned with the study of the Crusades at the history department of Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It includes analysis of students' theses, publications of faculty members, and course descriptions in order to reveal some of the ideological assumptions that underpin the understanding of the Crusades in this institution. It will also show how the political and religious stances taken by the Saudi authorities have influenced historical instruction and research in the university, particularly with regard to sensitive topics like the Crusades and East-West relations in general. We will see that the history department has a highly Islamo-centric world view and that some of its members even maintain the position that the Crusades never really ended but are rather ongoing.

Introduction

The study of history in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has developed progressively over the last century. It began during the reign of the founder

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of the state 'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Su'ūd (1932-1953). Three historiographical trends resulted from this movement. The first of these is the writing of so-called royal or official history, which focuses on the history of the Saudi state and its kings from the early stages of its inception. The second trend is local history, which sheds light on the history of a particular city, region, or tribe. Finally, the third trend is the writing of social history.

Despite the great progress that has occurred in Saudi historical writing, it continues to be heavily influenced by political developments. One of the most important issues in Saudi historiography, upon which it is necessary to shed some light, is the study of the history of the Crusades in Saudi universities. We will focus in this study on Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca.

How have Saudi historians in the Umm al-Qurā University Faculty of Sharī'a, the university's oldest faculty which was established in 1369 A.H./1950 A.D., dealt with the study of the Crusades? Has the writing of the history of the Crusades in Saudi Arabia remained hostage to the intervention of the state in academic affairs? What are the most important characteristics which comprise their ideological orientations? How have political conditions and circumstances been reflected in these orientations in light of the relation between the ruling ideology and the historians? Has the lightening of the ideological burden of the Crusades truly been mirrored in these orientations?

The Influence of the Religious Mentality on the Writing of the History of the Crusades

Marc Bloch (d. 1944) was concerned with the history of mentalities between religious positions and social realities on the basis of a dialectic of influencer-influenced from which it is possible to understand and make manifest the ideological background of the group. Bloch erected the structure of his approach on his openness to the methods of sociology, by which he was able to study the process in which the unconscious of the group was embodied through religious rituals and social practices which combine in themselves the inherited with the present, necessitating regard for the fascination of the sacred-worldly, its semiotic duality and the bursting forth of accumulated group mental images around it.¹ Therefore, we must ask ourselves whether it

¹ For example, see: D. Chirot, "Social and Historical Landscapes of Marc Bloch", in *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology. Conference on Methods of Historical Social Analysis*, ed. T. Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) pp. 22-46;

possible for us to understand the historiography of the Crusades in Saudi Arabia without drawing attention to the religious mentality in Umm al-Qurā University, the context in which it arose, and its influence on the writing of the history of Islam and the Middle Ages.

From a first reading, it is possible to say that facts are lurking in the ideological background of the historiographical and manuscript studies undertaken by both Saudi and non-Saudi researchers at Umm al-Qurā University which are closely connected to the consensus of the historians at this university regarding the political and religious uses of history. From the 1950s until shortly before the beginning of King Salmān's reign (2015-), Saudi Arabia was among the strongest supporters of the entire spectrum of Sunnī Islamist groups, using them to reinforce its position in regional and international conflicts and rivalries. In the light of this radicalism, Saudi historians at Umm al-Qurā University (which attracted many of the leaders and figureheads of these religio-political movements) embraced the study of history and heritage from the perspective of "Islam and the Other" or what the sociologists describe as a "self-defence mechanism". The influence of these political movements led to the spread and dominance of Islamic subjects in the university's historical curriculum and was mirrored in the courses on Islamic history and the period of the Crusades that were taught by many members of the teaching staff in the history department of Umm al-Qurā University (located within the Faculty of Sharī'a and Islamic Studies). Perhaps the most prominent of them were Jamāl 'Abd al-Hādī (1937-2024) and the many students who were trained by him and influenced by him as well as by the writings and ideas of Muḥammad Quṭb (1919-2014), who created the nucleus of the school of thought which promoted the "Islamization" of history, the sciences, and Islamic civilization and the establishment of a methodology for interacting with the cultural, intellectual, doctrinal, and civilizational aspects of the Islamic phenomenon.²

R. R. Davies, "Marc Bloch", *History*, vol. 52 (1967), 265–282; H. Baulig, "Marc Bloch, Géographe", *Annales d'Histoire Sociale*, vol. 8 (1945), 5–12; 'Abd al-Laṭīf Bilmu'ī, "Min al-Tārīkh ilā Dhīhnīyāt al-Tārīkh", *Arshif al-Mudawwanāt al-Tārīkhīya*, vol. 22 (August 2016).

² Jamāl 'Abd al-Hādī Mas'ūd was one of the icons of political Islam in Egypt and a professor in the history department of the Faculty of Letters and Humanities in King 'Abd al-'Azīz University in Jedda from 1973-1981, and then professor in the history department of Umm al-Qurā University until 1987. He called for using an Islamic

Jamāl ‘Abd al-Hādī took over the teaching of courses on Islamic history and Islamic influence on the West. He treated the period of the Crusades as a continuation of the Christian West’s military and ideological offensive against the Muslims in reaction to the success of the Islamic conquests and the capture of many lands and regions of the Christian World of that time, and as revenge for the conquests achieved during the reign of the caliph ‘Umar. Despite ‘Abd al-Hādī’s ideological agreement with his colleague ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmīdī (1950-),³ a clash between the two peers swiftly occurred after al-Ghāmīdī wrote a series of articles in the Saudi newspaper ‘Ukāz in which he accused ‘Abd al-Hādī of adopting the ideas of Sayyid Quṭb in his courses on Islamic history and the European-Islamic conflicts and attributing them to himself!

The ideological assumptions of the religio-political movements were reflected in particular in the academic courses concerning the Crusades. Thus the term “Islamic Nation” (al-Ummat al-Islāmīya) was used instead of “Arab Nation” (al-Ummat al-‘Arabīya). This led ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmīdī to reject the definitions and terms proposed by the great Egyptian historian of the Middle Ages ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Sa‘īd ‘Āshūr for the Crusades, because in al-Ghāmīdī’s opinion they did not reflect the true nature of the Crusades and did not express the Islamic point of view. Al-Ghāmīdī believed that it was necessary for Muslims to have an Islamic perspective on history, especially the history of the Muslim struggle against the Christian West.⁴

and Qur’ānic interpretation of history and he was against teaching the history of any non-Islamic civilization or state save from through an Islamic perspective in keeping with the teachings of Sayyid Quṭb. His most famous work was entitled *Errors that Must be Corrected in History: Methodology for Writing Islamic History, Why and How?* Jamāl ‘Abd al-Hādī Mas‘ūd, *Akhṭā’ Yajib an Tuṣaḥḥaḥ fī al-Tārīkh: Minhaj Kitābat al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī: Limādhā wa Kayfa?* (Cairo: Dār al-Wafā’, third edition 1994). Muḥammad Quṭb Huṣayn Shādhilī was an Egyptian Islamist writer and academic, the brother of Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966). He received political asylum in Saudi Arabia from King Fayṣal where he became the main theoretician for his brother’s ideas. He resided in Mecca and taught in Umm al-Qurā University where he trained many of the intellectuals of the Salafī-Jihādī school, most notably Safar al-Ḥawālī (1950-) who was considered the theoretician of Al-Tawaqquf wa al-Tabayyun, one of the Quṭbist groups.

³ For more on him see his biography here: <https://alghamdiprof.com/ali/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%AA%D9%8A/>, accessed on October 30, 2024.

⁴ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmīdī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-Muslimūn wa al-Ghazw al-Ṣalībī fī al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (Mecca: Markaz al-Marwah li al-Khidamāt al-‘Ilmīya, Jāmi‘at Umm al-Qurā, nd), pp. 2-4.

He believed that the Crusades were nothing more than episodes in a series of eternal world wars waged by the Christians and Jews against Islam from the time of the latter's inception. He further argued that the Crusades would continue until the descent of Jesus son of Mary at the end of time when he would break the cross and refuse to accept any religion save that of Islam, citing verses from the Qur'ān to indicate the correctness of his opinion as an objective extension of the Wahhābī discourse, which rests upon the direct citation of Qur'ānic verses without exegesis, and calls for the purification of belief and oneness of God, and the excommunication of all who contradict the literal meaning of the religious text.⁵ Indeed the works that were composed by Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792), the founder of the Wahhābī movement, consist of excerpts from *sharī'a* sources (namely the Qur'ān and the *Sunna*) and it should be noted that he avoided all commentary and interpretation, deeming that the religious text was completely clear and did not require any further explanation or interpretation.

These developments occurred at the expense of social and economic history, in opposition to materialist interpretations of history, and were reflected in the names and descriptions of the courses and curricula taught by some of the professors at Umm al-Qurā University, and even by changing the name of the Department of History and Archaeology to the Department of Islamic History and Civilization.⁶ The latter change occurred because for ideological reasons it was deemed un-Islamic to study archaeology! Such a position was maintained by a vision whose point of departure was the belief in an Islamo-centric religious perspective which disapproved of historical periods prior to it or different from it.

The location of the history department in the Faculty of Sharī'a meant that it was influenced by this general ideological background and especially by Quṭbist ideas in its methodology for approaching Islamic Civilization. The approaches of the orientalist in dealing with the non-material aspects of Islamic Civilization were considered biased and thus to be avoided. Islamic thought was presented with an air of privilege and superiority such that the sources of its peculiarity emanate from the fact that it derives its strength from divine revelation.

⁵ He refers to Qur'ān 2:120 and 3:69.

⁶ Yūrik Mātiyās Dīrīmān, *Kitābat al-Tārikh fī al-Mamlakat al-'Arabīya al-Su'ūdīya: Al-'Awlama wa al-Dawla fī al-Sharq al-Awsaṭ*, trans. 'Abdallāh b. Ibrāhīm al-'Askar (Beirut: Jadāwil li al-Nashr, 2015), p. 215.

Following the logic of this conception of history, the intellectual group mentality of Umm al-Qurā University becomes clear to us, using the methodology of Marc Bloch. It is apparent to us in the very names of the courses that concern the Crusades, which reveal the historians' assimilation of the mentality of contemporary Saudi society in their approach to teaching the history of both the Crusades and Ancient Persia (which they treated as a precursor to modern Iran). This example of group behavior reflects the group's mentality according to the proposition of Marc Bloch, which is by necessity the result of medieval historical accumulations as well as contemporary social and political behaviors and events.

The Descriptions of Courses on the Crusades in Umm al-Qurā University

The courses in the history department focused on the history of Islam. Whenever the study of the history of the Other was concerned, the starting point was always from a Sunnī Islamic perspective, far from the concerns of tribalism and avoiding the writings of non-Sunnī historians. The university offered courses that lacked a clear scientific or methodological vision and which bore farcical titles and descriptions, made no use of non-Arabic sources, and directed the students to non-specialist electronic sites such as Islam Online and Wikipedia!

In addition, until 2023, the works of non-specialist, non-academic, popularizing historians such as Rāghib al-Sirjānī and 'Alī al-Ṣallābī were relied upon.⁷ The main problem with these historians is not that they are non-specialists, for they did after all hold chairs as professors of history rather than of Islamic jurisprudence, but rather that they allow their ideology and whims to trump historical facts. They represent a political movement with a religious

⁷ Rāghib al-Sirjānī is a physician and an assistant professor of urology at Cairo University, with a strong interest in Islamic history, who supervises the *Qissat al-Islām (Story of Islam)* website. He was born in Al-Maḥalla Al-Kubra in 1964 and has published over thirty-eight books on history, including *Qīṣṣat al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya (The Story of the Crusades)* and *Qīṣṣat al-Mughūl (The Story of the Mongols)*. See <https://www.islamstory.com/> accessed on October 31, 2024. 'Alī Al-Sallābī, born in Benghazi, Libya, in 1963, initially studied engineering at Qaryūnis University before earning a PhD in Islamic Studies from Omdurman Islamic University in Sudan. He was influenced by the ideas of Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī and others. His notable works include *Mawṣū'at al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya (The Encyclopedia of the Crusades)* and *Al-Khilāfa al-Fāṭimīya (The Fatimid Caliphate)*.

façade which uses history as a vehicle for its ideology. They use the study of history to promote that which they believe to be the absolute truth, while they erase from history those events which do not accord with their ideological tendencies. Their interpretations of events are governed by no principle save for their ideological goals and they adhere to a romantic vision of history which revolves around the duality of good and evil.

This attitude becomes clear from the history course descriptions which were employed at Umm al-Qurā University such as “The Muslims and the Crusader Invasions in the Middle Ages”, “The Muslims and the European Invasions in the Modern Period”, “The Muslims and the Mongol Invasions”, “The Muslims and the European Invasions in the Modern Period”, “Islamic Minorities in the World”, “Centers of Islamic Civilization”, “The Influence of Islamic Civilization on the Sciences”, and “The Influence of Islamic Civilization on Europe”.⁸ All of these courses reveal an Islamo-centric world-view which sees history in terms of an endless struggle between Islam and the Crusaders, extending into modern times.

Between Scylla and Charybdis

For more than sixty years relations between the U.S.A. and Saudi Arabia developed in an atmosphere of warm friendship and strategic cooperation on a number of political issues such as combating the spread of communism in the Middle East and Central Asia and containing the influence of the Iranian Revolution. This was especially the case following the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the resulting war which lasted for over a decade. During this time, Mecca became, with the blessing of the Saudi state, a bastion of support for the Afghan mujāhidīn. The historians of the Crusades at Umm al-Qurā University adopted the principle of continuously searching the Islamic past for glorious events and periods from which they could draw feelings of pride and participation in shaping the present and future through the above-mentioned Islamo-centric history courses which they created at that time and by propagating the idea of a universal conspiracy against Islam. Members of

⁸ The author was a member of the curriculum review committee in the Department of History at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies, and he contributed to the development of the medieval curricula in the College. The above-mentioned courses were approved in the official meeting of the committee reviewing Islamic history curricula in the Department of History at Umm al-Qurā University on the third day of Dhū al-Ḥijja, 1442 A.H/ October 20, 2020 A.D.

the history department such as Musaffir al-Ghāmiḍī, ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmiḍī, and, in particular, ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmiḍī, expressed these sentiments in publications with such titles as “The Universalist Project and the Distortion of Islam in the West”, *The Perso-Roman War in Light of Sūrat al-Rūm*, *The Influence of Islamic Civilization on the West*, and “The Assault of Western Thought against Islam and its Prophet Muḥammad”.⁹ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmiḍī believed that he possessed the means to destroy the conceptions of the Western imagination about the Orient through the Crusades, which he considered to be part of a hegemonic system. Through his various publications he not only sought to deconstruct and demolish this system but also to create an alternative system in its place in order to correct what he regarded as the colonialist tendency inherent in the hegemonic Western system. To this end, he wrote works such as “Raymond Lull and his Attempts to Spread Christianity in North Africa”, “The European Vision of the Arabs and Islam during the Middle Ages”, and “John of Damascus, the First Intellectual Enemy of Islam”.¹⁰ In fact, most of his works were concerned with defending Islam and the image of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and with related issues, both medieval and contemporary.

In his writings on the Crusades, ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmiḍī invoked the characterization of the Crusaders in the Arabic primary sources as “infidel enemies” and he described them with a harshness bordering on savagery. He also asserted that their level of civilization was far beneath that of the Arabs, and claimed that there were many historical incidents which justified the description of the Other as “savage and uncivilized”. In this context it was natural that the historical publications from Umm al-Qurā University dealt with the European Crusader from a standpoint of hostility, even though the

⁹ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmiḍī, “Al-Mashrū‘ al-Kawnī wa Atharuhu fi Tashwīh al-Islām fi al-Gharb”, from his official website <https://alghamdiprof.com>, last visited April 22, 2023; Idem., *Al-Ḥarb bayn al-Rūm wa al-Furs fi Ḍaw‘ Sūrat al-Rūm: Al-I‘jāz al-Tārīkhī fi Sūrat al-Rūm* (Mecca, 2015); Idem., *Athar al-Ḥaḍārat al-Islāmīya ‘alā al-Gharb* (Mecca, 2015); Idem., “‘Udwān al-Fikr al-Gharbī ‘alā al-Islām wa ‘alā Nabīhi Muḥammad”, from his official website <https://alghamdiprof.com>, last visited April 22, 2023.

¹⁰ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmiḍī, “Al-Rāhib al-Fransīkī Raymund Lull wa Muḥāwalātuhi li Nashr al-Naṣrānīya fi Shimāl Afrīqīya”, *Majallat al-Mu‘arrīkh al-‘Arabī*, vol. 6, no. 6 (1998) pp. 134-169; Idem., “Al-Ru‘yat al-Ūrūbīya li al-‘Arab wa al-Islām khilāl al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā”, *Majallat al-Mu‘arrīkh al-‘Arabī: Nadwat Ittihād al-Mu‘arrīkhīn al-‘Arab bi ‘Unwān Al-‘Arab wa Ūrūbā ‘abra ‘Uṣūr al-Tārīkh*, no. 7 (Cairo, 1999) pp. 59-87; Idem., *Yuḥannā al-Dīmaṣḥī: Rā‘id al-‘Udwān al-Fikrī ‘alā al-Islām* (Mecca: Umm al-Qurā University, 2015).

Crusades were wars like any other war despite being clothed in the garb of religion. In fact, the works on the Crusades produced by the history department at Umm al-Qurā University were frequently less objective than the medieval Arabic sources in their treatment of the Crusaders, for the medieval Arab historians respected the bravery, fighting skills, and endurance of their opponents.

Another reflection of this attitude was the description of the Crusading expeditions by the Saudi historians at Umm al-Qurā University as “Christian Expeditions” or “Christian Invasions” and of their forces as “the Armies of the Cross whose chief motivations were to spread the Christian creed and recover the True Cross which they slanderously and unjustly claimed to have contained drops of the blood of the noble Messiah, not to mention the story of the Crucifixion itself which the Christians believe in while we oppose them over this false claim”. The historians of Umm al-Qurā arrived at the conclusion that the Crusades were “...religious, doctrinal wars waged by Christian Europe which aimed to occupy the holy places in Bilād al-Shām and expel the Muslims from al-Andalus which later took the form of a great missionary movement and a secular intellectual assault which sought to turn the Muslims from their religion and destroy their beliefs”.¹¹

Even though the term “Crusades” is a purely Western term which the leaders of the expeditions applied to their actions, the Saudi researchers at Umm al-Qurā University have emphasized the religious character of these expeditions while referring to the Europeans with disdainful terms like *Nuṣārā* (Nazarenes) and *kuffār* (infidels) which are early Islamic terms that recall the payment of the *jizya* (poll tax). They have adopted the view of the inevitability of the revival of Islamic Civilization and they invoke the concept of *jihād* against the West, which they view as the enemy of Islam, as well as the liberation of the Al-Aqṣā Mosque and of Palestine. Such ideas are espoused by ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghāmīdī in his doctoral thesis on the Mamluk *jihād* in which he also praises the Mamluks for their attention to the holy war and for implanting its values in the hearts of their soldiers, emphasizing that *jihād* is a duty for every Muslim and that it is no less important than the five pillars of Islam!¹² Ibn Khaldūn made a distinction between “unjust wars of

¹¹ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmīdī, *Muḥāḍarāt Al-Muslimūn wa al-Ghazw al-Ṣalībī fī al-‘Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* (Mecca: Markaz al-Marwa) p. 4.

¹² ‘Abd Allāh al-Ghāmīdī, “*Jihād al-Mamālīk ḍidd al-Mughūl wa-al-Ṣalībīyyīn fī Bilād al-Shām fī al-niṣf al-thānī min al-qarn al-sābi‘ al-hijrī*,” (PhD Thesis, Umm al-Qurā University, 1986), pp. 2, 459.

aggression” and “holy war” which is useful in understanding the reception of the Crusades by the Saudi scholars.¹³

They do not take into account that in the present time there are internationally-agreed means of dealing with aggression and occupation by framing it as illegal under international law and addressing it in the United Nations. Unfortunately, religious radicalism remains deeply embedded in our Islamic society, and it is necessary to deconstruct the extremist religious discourse in order to build a more open society capable of participating in the present and building a common future for all of mankind.

The historians at Umm al-Qurā interact with the dominant political and cultural climate and have plunged into the extremist sectarian religious conflicts of our time. They present themselves as representatives of their sects and ideological schools and of Sunnī Islam which forms the basis of their ideological identity. This sectarian tendency finds strong expression in the titles and contents of the History Department’s courses concerning Shī‘ism and Iran. The professors in the department have taken a hostile stance towards all of the Shī‘ī dynasties in Islamic history, denying them any positive role in Islamic civilization and in the resistance to the Crusades.

The “Vengeance” Reading of History

The theses from Umm al-Qurā on the Crusades focus on the idea of vengeance in the history of relations with the Shī‘a and with what they refer to as “The Christian West”. An example is “The Influence of the Esoteric Movements in Hampering the Jihād against the Crusaders”, by Yūsuf Ibrāhīm al-Shaykh ‘Īd al-Zāmīlī.¹⁴ There is also the thesis by Al-Bundarī Muḥammad al-Sharīf entitled “Saladin’s Efforts to Eliminate the Ismā‘īlī Shī‘ī Sect in Egypt” in which the author attempted to prove that the Fatimids and the Crusaders conspired together against Islam and in which she called for a revival of the project of Saladin in the modern world to defeat the enemies of Islam.¹⁵ She adheres fervently to the sectarian Wahhābī outlook of her mentors such as

¹³ ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Khaldūn, *Al-‘Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa al-Khabar*, eds. Khalīl Shahāda and Suhayl Zakkār, 8 vols. (Dār al-Fikr: Beirut, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 181, 334.

¹⁴ Yūsuf Ibrāhīm al-Shaykh ‘Īd al-Zāmīlī, *Athar al-Ḥarakāt al-Bāṭiniyya fī ‘Arqalat al-Jihād ḍidd al-Ṣalībīyīn* (Jordan: Dār al-Ma‘ālī, 1998)

¹⁵ Al-Bundarī Muḥammad al-Sharīf, “Juhūd Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī fī al-Qaḍā’ ‘alā al-Madhab al-Shī‘ī al-Ismā‘īlī fī Miṣr (564-589 h./1169-1193 m.)”, (MA thesis, Umm al-Qurā University, 2022).

‘Alī ‘Awdat, Musaffir, and ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī and it is through their influence that the jihadist discourse has entered modern studies on Saladin and the Crusades.

This historian emphasised that Egypt returned once again to the Sunnī sect under the banner of the Abbasids in 1171 even though this is inaccurate.¹⁶ For the bulk of the Egyptian Muslim population remained Sunnī even under the rule of the Fatimids, and Egyptian jurists played a major role in the development of Sunnī law, such as the Awlād ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, Layth b. Sa‘d, and the great Al-Shāfi‘ī himself.

Musaffir al-Ghāmidī’s thesis is concerned with the “Islamic Jihad against the Crusaders during the Zankid Period (1097-1173)”, and he has published a book entitled “The Islamic Jihad against the Crusaders in the Islamic East before the Establishment of the Ayyubid State in Egypt”, which discusses the role of the Ismā‘īlīs in hampering the efforts of Sunnī Muslim leaders in repulsing the Crusades as well as the fall of Tripoli into Fatimid hands in 1107, which he believes paved the way for its conquest by the Crusaders two years later. In these works, he expounded at length on the religious duty of jihad against the Crusaders. He examined the position of the Abbasid caliphate towards the question of fighting the Crusaders, focusing in particular on the caliph Al-Mustarshid Billāh (1118-1135) and the latter’s role in reviving the authority of the Abbasid Caliphate as well as in encouraging jihad against the Crusaders. He contrasted this with what he perceived as the weakness and duplicity of the Fatimids in the face of the Crusades, which led to the fall of Tyre and Asqalān. He also looks at the important role played by the Artuqid dynasty of Mosul (est. 1102) in resisting the earliest wave of Crusader invasions in the Jazīra, noting their important victory against the Crusaders in the battle of Ḥarrān in 1103, and the continuation of Muslim resistance to the Crusaders in the same region under the Zankids, culminating in the conquest of the County of Edessa by ‘Imād al-Dīn Zankī in 1144. Some students of the department have written about jihad in contexts apart from the Crusades such as Wafā’ ‘Abdallāh Sulaymān al-Mazrū‘ whose thesis concerns “The Jihad of the Muslims beyond the Pyrenees from the First to Fifth Century A.H.”,¹⁷ ‘Ā’isha bint ‘Uthmān’s “The Ribats of the Ulema and

¹⁶ Yūsuf Ibrāhīm al-Shaykh, *Athar al-Ḥarakāt al-Bāṭiniyya fī ‘Arqalat al-Jihād dīdd al-Ṣalībīyīn*, (Jordan: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1998), p. 167.

¹⁷ Wafā’ ‘Abdallāh bin Sulaymān al-Mazrū‘, *Jihād al-Muslimīn Khalf Jibāl al-Burtāt min al-Qarn al-Awwal ilā al-Qarn al-Khāmis al-Hijrī* (Cairo: Maktabat Ḥahrā’ al-Sharq, 2003).

their Jihad on the Syrian Frontier against the Byzantines during the Time of the Abbasid Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (785-809)",¹⁸ and Fāṭima bint Ḥāy bin Yaḥyā al-Ḥajjī al-Sufyānī's "The Raids of the Danish Normans on the Kingdom of the Franks and al-Andalus (756-1009)".¹⁹

The researcher Nabīl Riḍwān agrees with 'Alī 'Awdat al-Ghāmīdī in his study on the "Crusades in the Modern Era" that the idea of the Crusades continued to exist even after the end of the formal Crusading wars in the Near East during the medieval period.²⁰ He divides the modern Crusades into three fronts: the Maghrib, the Mashriq (Middle East), and the South (represented by the colonization of Islamic lands in sub-Saharan Africa). The historian Al-Mu'taṣim Billāh Ibrāhīm has written a thesis on the "Jihad of the Ottomans against the Byzantines (1354-1453)" which also describes how the existence of the Ottoman Empire blocked European colonization of the East for a long time.²¹ Ḥayyāt bint Munāwar al-Rashīdī wrote a thesis on the American missionaries in the late Ottoman Empire.²² It is noteworthy that 'Alī 'Awdat al-Ghāmīdī himself is always very careful to add the title "mujaḥid" before any Muslim leader who was involved in fighting against the Crusaders.²³

All of these theses and studies are anchored in the themes of jihad, the role of the caliphate, and the concept of (Sunnī) Muslim unity in opposition to the

¹⁸ 'Ā'isha bint 'Uthmān bin Mu'allim Yūsuf al-'Abbāsī, "Ribāṭ al-'Ulamā' wa Jihādhum fī al-Thughūr al-Shāmiyya ḍidd al-Rūm Zamān al-Khalīfa al-'Abbāsī Hārūn al-Rashīd raḥimahu Allāh (170 H - 193 AH / 785 M - 809 CE)", (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Umm al-Qurā University, 2017).

¹⁹ Fāṭima bint Ḥāy bin Yaḥyā al-Ḥajjī al-Sufyānī, "Ghārāt al-Nūrmān al-Dāniyīn 'alā Arāḍi Dawlat al-Firanjah wa Bilād al-Āndalus fī 'Aṣr al-Imāma wa al-Khilāfa (138 - 399 AH/ 756 - 1009 CE)" (Unpublished PhD Thesis Umm al-Qurā University, 2002).

²⁰ Nabīl Raḍwān, *Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya fī al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib wa al-Janūb al-'Arabī* (Curriculum of Umm al-Qurā University, academic year 1435–1436 AH), p. 126; Al-Ghāmīdī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-Muslimūn wa al-Ghazw al-Ṣalībī*, p. 6.

²¹ Al-Mu'taṣim Billāh Ibrāhīm Sha't, "Jihād al-'Uthmāniyīn ḍidd al-Bizantiyīn ḥattā Fath al-Qusṭanṭīniya (755 - 857 H / 1354 - 1453 M)", (Unpublished MA Thesis, Umm al-Qurā University, 1980).

²² Ḥayyāt bint Munāwar bin Farḥān al-Rashīdī, "Al-Irsāliyyāt al-Tanṣīriyyah al-Amrīkiya fī al-Dawla al-'Uthmāniya wa Āthāruhā", (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Umm al-Qurā University, 2011).

²³ 'Alā 'Awdat al-Ghamdī, "Al-Rūḥ al-Ṣalībīyah, wa al-Ṣaḥwah al-Injīliya, wa al-Budhrat al-ūlā li al-Fikrat al-Ṣahyūniya", *Official website for 'Alī 'Awdat al-Ghamdī*, accessed on January 07, 2024: <https://alghamdiprof.com/ali/category/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d9%82%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%aa/>

Crusaders both in the Islamic East and al-Andalus, on the path to realizing the Salafi dream of reestablishing an Islamic caliphate in the modern world. This is an unmistakably Wahhābī narrative, though it does not mean that the field of historical studies at Umm al-Qurā University is necessarily an organic outgrowth of Wahhābism, but it is, without doubt, an objective extension of Wahhābī thought, for it is based on the study of the literal meaning of the text without any attempt to interpret it.

The Crusades between Wahhābism and Jihadist Thought

The historical studies from Umm al-Qurā University concerning the history of the Crusades and the notion of jihad present us with a number of ideas worthy of consideration regarding the continuity or “osmosis” between Wahhābism (as origin) and Salafi jihadism (as representation). They also provide an abundance of evidence which affirms that Wahhābism is the intellectual authority upon which these studies and their vision of civilizational clash are based and the organizing principle behind the selection of thesis topics in the history department. However, the emotional and hostile character of the language in which these theses are cast negatively affects their contents and deprives them of much of their authority. They appear to be polemical ideological writings rather than academic theses that aim to shed light on obscure aspects of the history of the Crusades.

We must not forget the political climate in the background of the works of these Saudi historians who are concerned with what they see as confronting the spread of Shī‘ism. For example, in the history department at Umm al-Qurā University, no theses have been written and no courses have been offered concerning the history of the Fatimid Caliphate or its role in the Crusades. This coincides with a general contempt for the Shī‘a, who are described as “khwārij” (those who secede from the Muslim community), and with an exaggeration of the “Shī‘ī threat”. For example, the Shī‘ī threat to the Abbasid Caliphate, represented by the Buwayhids, is grossly exaggerated while all other factors in Abbasid weakness and decline are minimized.²⁴

These attitudes were extended into the field of manuscript studies as well. When the Institute for the Revival of the Islamic Heritage was founded in 1976, with the participation of the History Department, its mission was restricted to editing manuscripts of the Prophetic biography (*al-sīra al-*

²⁴ Nabīl Riḍwān, “Al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībiya fī al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib wa al-Janūb al-‘Arabī”, in *Muqarrarat Jāmi‘at Umm al-Qurā*, Academic Year 1435-1436 A.H., p. 128.

nabawīya) and accounts of the Islamic holy cities by Sunnī scholars.²⁵ The goals of the institute were stated in numerous proclamations by the Department of History such as the following:

To preserve and revive our heritage which was bequeathed to us by the earliest generations of pious Muslims, fearing its loss...to enable us to protect our cultural heritage from change and distortion...to collaborate in benefiting the umma by protecting its Islamic heritage from distortion or alteration... preventing its enemies, the Christians in Western Europe, from, in their own words, attempting to distort and slander its history, and disparage it, because they realize that a documented history aids in knowing truths...against the continuous and unending attempts of the enemies of our umma, the Christians and the *khawārij*, to alter and distort history.²⁶

Likewise, in their studies on the historiography of the Crusades and the editions of Arabic primary sources, members of the history department at Umm al-Qurā University are always careful to state the religion and sect of the author whose work is being studied or edited, for in order for the topic to be approved, the author whose work is being studied or edited must be a Sunnī Muslim. For sectarian reasons, the department has completely neglected topics such as the study of the period of Fatimid rule over the Hejaz and the role of the militant Sufi volunteers who defended the frontier zones during the Crusades. In addition, it has undertaken several manuscript editing projects lacking in academic impartiality such as the editions of the works entitled *Al-'Aylam al-Zākhir* and *'Uqūd al-Jumān*. The editors of the manuscripts saw themselves as presenting a great service to the Islamic *umma*

²⁵ Mawjiz 'an Kullīyat al-Sharī'a wa al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīya min al-Fatra 1425-1430 h., (Mecca: Maṭābi' Jāmi'at Umm al-Qurā, 2010), pp. 9-11.

²⁶ Īmān 'Uthmān al-Barnāwī, "Al-'Aylam al-Zākhir fī Akhbār al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhir li Mu'allifihī Muṣṭafā b. Ḥasan al-Hāshimī al-Mashhūr bi Al-Jannābī (d. 1590) min Bidāyat Kitāb fī Dhikr Aḥwāl Nabīnā al-Muṣṭafā Ṣallā Allah 'alayhi wa Sallim wa Dhikr Ghazawātihi wa ba'd Khaṣā'ishihī al-Sharīfa: Dirāsa wa Taḥqīq" (MA thesis, Umm al-Qurā Univ., 2018), p. 8; 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Alī Fāliḥ al-Basharī, "Al-'Aylam al-Zākhir fī Akhbār al-Awā'il wa al-Awākhir: Dawlat al-Mamālik min Bidāyat Ḥukm al-Mu'izz Aybak ḥattā Nihāyat Ḥukm al-Ashraf Barsbāy" (MA thesis, Umm al-Qurā Univ., 2017), pp. 3-5, 16-17.

in editing and publishing these works because the works displayed the efforts made in the study of history by authors who held correct religious beliefs.²⁷

In his treatment of the role of the Fatimids during the Crusades, ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmīdī accuses the Fatimids for ideological reasons of not being concerned with the fate of the Muslims in Bilād al-Shām, especially following the capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders (1099).²⁸ He is influenced in this interpretation by the article of his colleague, ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmīdī, entitled “The Concern of Saladin and Nūr al-Dīn with the Establishment of Sunnī Colleges to Defeat the Esoteric Shī‘ī Creed Promoted by the Fatimids”. He refers to the Fatimids disparagingly as *Al-‘Ubaydiyya al-Shī‘īya wa al-Khawārij*, avoiding any sense of scholarly objectivity and neutrality, instead embracing the interpretation of history as vengeance and fanning the flames of the Sunnī – Shī‘ī conflict in the region. He neglects the distinction made by the medieval historian Ibn al-Khaṭīb al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1374) between the Fatimid caliphs who ruled in the Maghrib and those who ruled in Egypt and the Hejaz. Ibn al-Khaṭīb labelled the former “‘Ubaydids” from the name of the founder of the dynasty, ‘Ubaydallāh al-Mahdī (909-934), while he called the latter “Fatimids”.²⁹ We find the influence of both ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmīdī and ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmīdī on the narrow-minded outlook of their student ‘Ā’isha Marshūd al-Ḥarbī in her study entitled “The Influence of the Crusades on the Handcrafts in Alexandria during the ‘Ubaydid and Ayyubid Periods” where she states that the reason for the coming of the Crusaders to the Near East was a conspiracy to revive the “‘Ubaydid” state and that the high officials of the ‘Ubaydid palace were in contact with the Crusaders.³⁰

²⁷ Al-Basharī, “Al-‘Aylam al-Zākhīr”, p. 5.

²⁸ ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmīdī, *Istirdād Bayt al-Maqdis fī ‘Aṣr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, (Mecca: Al-Fayṣaliya, 1985), p. 150.

²⁹ See Ibn al-Khaṭīb al-Gharnāṭī, *A ‘māl al-A ‘lām*, eds. Aḥmad Mukhtār al-‘Abbādī and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Kinānī, 3 parts (Casablanca: Dār al-Kitāb, 1964), part 3, p. 46; Aḥmad Khalīl al-Shāl, *Ḥukm Qarāqūsh* (Cairo: Al-Dār al-Dhahabīya, 2000); Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Hilālī, “Qarāqūsh: al-Muftarā ‘alayhi”, *Majallat al-Dawḥa*, no. 3 (March 1977, pp. 132-133); ‘Amr Munīr, *Al-Fashūsh fī Aḥkām Qarāqūsh* (Cairo: Al-Hay’a al-‘Āmma al-Miṣrīya li al-Kitāb, 2021).

³⁰ ‘Ā’isha Marshūd Ḥamīd al-Ḥarbī, “Ta’thīrāt al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya ‘alā al-Anshīṭa al-Yadawīya fī al-Iskandarīya khilāl al-‘Aṣrayn al-‘Ubaydī wa al-Ayyūbī”, *Majallat al-Ulūm al-‘Arabīya wa al-Insānīya – Jāmi‘at al-Qaṣīm*, vol. 16, no. 3 (2023) p. 1341.

The Religious Interpretation of the History of the Crusades

It is no exaggeration to say that much of the history of Bilād al-Shām during the medieval period is studied at Umm al-Qurā University from the perspective of the Islamic jurist rather than that of the professional historian. We see this clearly in ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī’s book entitled *Historical Falsehoods and Errors: Critical Views of the Book “The Influence of the Crusades on Sunnī – Shī‘ī Relations”*. According to his own words the author seeks to “...describe the bitter betrayals which the Shī‘ī traitors have attempted to portray in a positive light, to reject the glorification of the past of the Imāmī Shī‘a and stand against the lies that they have created about their imagined heroism during the Crusades, and to refute the claim that they stood with the Sunna in the same trench against the Crusaders, a falsehood that is proclaimed in order to promote the Khomeini regime in Iran”.³¹ He criticizes the Lebanese historians of the Crusades in particular, claiming that they deserve no place among the distinguished historians of the Arab World.³²

At times, Al-Ghāmidī turns his historian’s gaze to contemporary events, attempting to compare the Crusades to the Russian intervention in Syria. According to him: “There is no doubt that the Russian war in Syria is a Crusade. It is an attempt to compensate for Russia’s lack of involvement in the medieval Crusades. Russia and the Magians [*majūs* is a derogatory term used to refer to the Shī‘a and to Iran] are against the Muslim people of Syria today just as the Crusaders were during the Middle Ages”.³³ Parallels are also drawn by Al-Ghāmidī between Crusader-Muslim truces during the medieval period and modern Arab-Israeli peace agreements. He is particularly vehement in his condemnation of the Ayyubid sultan Al-Kāmil’s (1218-1238) peace agreement with the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1220-1250), the so-called Treaty of Jaffa of 1229, which restored Crusader rule to Jerusalem for the last time while allowing the Muslims to retain control of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf. Al-Ghāmidī likens this treaty to the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel in 1979.³⁴

³¹ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī, *Abāṭīl wa Akhṭā’ Tārīkhīya: Naḡārāt Naqḏīya fī Kitāb Athar al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya ‘alā al-‘Alāqāt al-Sunnīya al-Shī‘īya* (Mecca, 2020), p. 5.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³³ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī, “Ḥarb Rūsīya al-Ṣalībīya fī Sūrīyā”, from his official website <https://alghamdiprof.com>, last visited January 9, 2024.

³⁴ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī, *Bilād al-Shām qubayl al-Ghazw al-Mughūlī*, p. 269.

The first generation of historians at Umm al-Qurā University took it upon themselves to promote the Saudi view on the Crusades and to criticize the studies on the Crusades that have been written by Western historians, orientalist, and objective Arab historians. The goal behind such activities is to employ the history of the Islamic world for political goals, chiefly in order to promote an Islamist worldview in place of a more secular Arabist worldview.

Cities during the Crusades

Some of the medieval Islamic cities and frontier districts (*thughūr*), especially those in southern Asia Minor, have been the subject of detailed studies by the historians of Umm al-Qurā University. ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī has contributed a study on Antalya during the period of the Crusades with a rich bibliography. He gives special attention to the Crusader expedition against Antalya in 1361 which was led by King Peter I of Cyprus. Al-Ghāmidī takes up the question of why the Antalya expedition has received so little attention compared to the expedition against Alexandria four years later which was led by the same king. According to him, the disparity can be explained by the fact that Egypt had a number of historians who were active at the time and who witnessed the Crusader assault on Alexandria, while southwestern Asia Minor in the 1360s did not have any notable historians who could have written about the Antalya expedition.³⁵

‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī has written a study on the relations between the Mamluk sultans and the strategic port of Ayās in Lesser Armenia. He notes the important role that it played as a logistical base for the Crusaders from the time of the First Crusades onwards. He also discusses how European merchants were able to draw the Orient trade away from the Red Sea route with its outlet in Alexandria, to an overland route that passed through Central Asia and Iran before reaching the Mediterranean at Ayās, and how this negatively impacted Egypt’s economy.³⁶ ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī has studied other cities from the period as well. He has contributed a work on the small but important city of Shayzar in central Syria from the middle of the twelfth

³⁵ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī, *Anṭāliya fī ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya* (Mecca: Umm al-Qurā, 1997), p. 9.

³⁶ ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī, “Siyāsāt Salāṭīn Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Baḥrīya izā’a Mīnā’ Ayās al-Armanī”, *Maḡallat Jāmi‘at al-Imām Muḥammad b. Su‘ūd al-Islāmīya*, vol. 39 (2003), p. 794.

century, when it ceased to be ruled by the famous Arab dynasty of the Banū Munqidh, until the end of the thirteenth century. He focuses in particular on how it was incorporated into the Zankid state and the role that it played in repelling Crusader offensives.³⁷

The history of the military frontier regions or *thughūr* in northern Bilād al-Shām and southern Asia Minor has also been a popular topic of study at Umm al-Qurā University. ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī has written about the *thughr* of al-Maṣṣīṣa from the Islamic conquest until the end of the eleventh century.³⁸ This was an important region of the Byzantine-Islamic frontier in northern Bilād al-Shām. He wrote another study about the evolution of the *thughr* of Adhana (Adana) during the same period, highlighting how in the eleventh century this region became a theatre of conflict between the Armenians, Byzantines and Seljuk Turks, to which a new element was added at the end of the century with the arrival of the Crusaders.³⁹

‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī has written a study on Ḥiṣn Baghrās and its role in the Crusades. This fortress was crucial for securing the route between Cilicia and Antioch; al-Ghāmidī calls it the “key to Antioch”. He describes its initial capture by the Crusaders in 1097 and its subsequent purchase and use as a base by the Templars, followed by its conquest by the sultan Baybars and its service to the Mamluk sultans as a marshalling point for their armies during the long drawn-out conquest of Lesser Armenia, which was not concluded until 1375.⁴⁰

The Use of European Sources

Despite the diversity of intellectual production in the field of Crusade studies by the faculty of the History Department, it is noteworthy that the authors suffer from a lack of competency in foreign languages and neglect to exploit

³⁷ ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī, “Shayzar mundhu Zawāl Ḥukm Banī Munqidh ḥattā Awākhir al-Qarn al-Tāsi’ al-Hijrī/al-Thālith ‘Ashar al-Milādī”, *Majallat Jāmi‘at al-Azhar: Kulliyat al-Lughat al-‘Arabīya bi Asyūt*, no. 19 (2000) pp. 191-240.

³⁸ ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī, “Thughr al-Maṣṣīṣa mundhu al-Fatḥ hattā Nihāyat al-Qarn al-Khāmis al-Hijrī”, *Majallat al-Mu‘arrikh al-Miṣrī*, vol. 22 (1999) pp. 211-263.

³⁹ ‘Abdallāh al-Ghāmidī, “Thughr Adhana mundhu al-Fatḥ ḥattā Nihāyat al-Qarn al-Khāmis al-Hijrī”, *Majallat Jāmi‘at Umm al-Qurā*, vol. 66 (2016) pp. 257-285.

⁴⁰ ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmidī, “Ḥiṣn Baghrās wa Dawruhu al-Ḥarbī fī ‘Aṣr al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīya”, in *Nadwat Ittiḥād al-Mu‘arrikhīn al-‘Arab bi al-Qāhira* (Cairo, 1995) pp. 261-314.

the medieval European primary sources on the Crusades. For example, ‘Alī ‘Awdat al-Ghāmīdī, in his study on the condition of Bilād al-Shām prior to the Mongol invasion, makes use of no European primary source save for William of Tyre’s *Deeds Done beyond the Sea*. His third chapter, on Ayyubid relations with the Crusaders from 1193 to 1258, does not cite a single European source! Likewise, in his study on the Battle of Myriocephalon (1176), which cemented the Seljuk Turkish presence in Asia Minor, he did not refer to a single Byzantine source, not even to Kinnamos’ composition on *The Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, which is an indispensable source for that battle. Unfortunately, the neglect of non-Arabic primary sources remains a characteristic feature of studies concerning the Crusades by the students and faculty members of the History Department at Umm al-Qurā University.

Conclusion

The writing of the history of the Crusades at Umm al-Qurā University is intermixed with various political, religious, sectarian, and other ideological concerns and it is in no way objective. The Saudi historians at Umm al-Qurā University have produced hundreds of studies over succeeding generations which revolve around a specific religio-political discourse. These studies treat the Crusades both in general and in detail. They include several forays into important specialized topics such as the cities of Asia Minor and their role in the Crusades, which perhaps make the Saudi school of Crusade studies unique. Nonetheless, we can safely say that the historians of Umm al-Qurā University have not made any significant contribution to the efforts of Arab historians elsewhere in the study of the Crusades. Nor have they departed from the study of political and military history to the more spacious fields of social and economic history. They have also failed to open new horizons by exploiting Arabic literary sources such as belles lettres, poetry, and popular literature, and they have neglected to make adequate use of the medieval European primary sources, even though some of them have been translated into Arabic. Also striking is their inability to make any clear contribution to our knowledge of the Hejaz during the period of the Crusades.

In popular imagination, the image of the Crusades is intertwined with images of blood-soaked violence and savagery, leaving memories of barbarity and religious fanaticism which are exceptional even by medieval standards. Unfortunately, it is this popular understanding of the Crusades which dominates the approach to the subject at Umm al-Qurā University. In that context the study of the Crusades remains a captive of distorted history, and

a popular imagination that idolizes strength and exceptional stories of individual bravery, with no regard for the disastrous consequences that such sterile martial contests can have on humanity.

Translated by Amar S. Baadj

MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN RELATIONS WITH THE ISLAMIC WORLD IN THE WORKS OF THE HISTORIAN MAḤMŪD ISMĀ'ĪL

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Abstract

*The Egyptian scholar Maḥmūd Ismā'īl 'Abd al-Rāziq (b. 1940) is one of the most famous and influential contemporary Arab historians of the medieval period. In his ten volume work *Sūsiyūlūjiyyā al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, he presented a comprehensive history of medieval Islamic civilisation in its economic, social, political and cultural aspects arranged around a bold, innovative theoretical framework, employing novel terminology and a new system of periodisation. His approach is historical materialist. He begins with a careful reconstruction of the socio-economic bases of a given historical period which in his view provides the foundation for understanding first the political history and then the cultural and intellectual production of the given period. This article will discuss Ismā'īl's model of medieval Islamic history with special attention to the place of the major Christian-Muslim confrontations of the medieval period in his works: namely the Crusades, the Reconquista, and the Norman conquest of Sicily. We will see that in contrast to many other Arab historians he does not attach great importance to the ideological and religious aspects of these struggles, but rather views them in the context of competition for control of international trade routes. We will also examine his views on the effects that these conflicts had on internal developments within medieval Muslim society.*

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Introduction

The Egyptian scholar Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl ‘Abd al-Rāziq (b. 1940) is one of the most famous and influential contemporary Arab historians.¹ He is a specialist in the history of the medieval Maghrib by training who has written many important monographs and articles on the history of the region. Ismā‘īl has considerably influenced the study of medieval Islamic history in the Arab World. During the 1970s he taught at Fez University where he played a key role in establishing the Moroccan school of historiography, training some of the leading contemporary Moroccan historians such as Ibrāhīm al-Qādirī Būṭshīsh and Aḥmad al-Ṭāhirī. In the 1990s he worked as a visiting professor at Kuwait University before returning to Egypt where he is currently emeritus professor of history at ‘Ayn Shams University in Cairo. His former students, many prominent historians themselves, teach in universities across the Arab World from the Maghreb to the Gulf. They share his commitment to the historical-materialist approach, with a great interest in social and economic questions, as well as the history of mentalities. They have in turn trained a third generation of promising historians. Many of these younger historians identify themselves as adherents of “al-Madrasa al-Maḥmūdiyya” or the historiographical school of Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl.²

Ismā‘īl’s *magnum opus* is a ten-volume history of Islamic civilization from its origins until the sixteenth century entitled *Sūsiyūlūjīyā al-Fikr al-Islāmī* (*Sociology of Islamic Thought*).³ His writings are informed by a Marxian vision of history in which class struggle plays a key role. He makes great use of the Marxist concept of the “modes of production” in an innovative manner that

¹ He is commonly known as Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl, therefore in this paper we will henceforth refer to him as Ismā‘īl rather than ‘Abd al-Rāziq.

² For more information about Ismā‘īl’s life, scholarship, and his influence on other historians see Amar S. Baadj, “Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl and his Historical-Materialist Approach to the History of the Medieval Islamic World”, in B. Zachariah, R. Raphael, and B. Bernet, eds. *What’s Left of Marxism: Historiography and the Possibilities of Thinking with Marxian Themes and Concepts* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020) pp. 147-170; Brahim El Kadiri Boutchich and Azeddine Guessous, “L’histoire sociale et économique médiévale de Al-Magrib et Al-Andalus chez les chercheurs arabes”, in Amar S. Baadj, ed. *A Handbook of Modern Arabic Historical Scholarship on the Ancient and Medieval Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 2021) pp. 431-444; Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl, *Jadal al-Anā wa al-Ākhar: Sira Dhātīya* (Cairo: Al-Ru’ya, 2008).

³ Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā al-Fikr al-Islāmī*, vols. 1–7 (Cairo: Sinā li al-Nashr; Beirut: Al-Intishār al-‘Arabī, 2000), vols. 8–10 (Cairo: Miṣr al-Maḥrūsa, 2005).

differs from the traditional usage. In his view, the social, political, and intellectual development of the medieval Islamic world was shaped by the interplay of two competing modes of production: the feudal and bourgeois modes of production. At times, one mode was ascendant over the other, however, the non-ascendant mode subsisted in a marginal role.⁴

In his *Sociology of Islamic Thought* Ismā‘īl developed a unique periodization of Islamic history. The first Umayyad Caliphate (661-750) witnessed the preponderance of the feudal mode of production. The Abbasid Revolution which caused its downfall was the last of many anti-Umayyad bourgeois revolts and it ushered in the “First Bourgeois Awakening” which lasted until the middle of the ninth century. This was followed by a brief resurgence of feudalism in the middle of the ninth century when the Turks were ascendant in Baghdad and the Umayyad amirate of Cordoba underwent a process of disintegration.⁵ The second, most important Bourgeois Awakening began in the early tenth century and lasted until about the middle of the eleventh century. This was when the Buwayhids ruled in Mesopotamia and western Iran, the Fatimids in Ifrīqīya and later Egypt, and when the Umayyads of Cordoba regained direct control over al-Andalus and proclaimed their caliphate. In Ismā‘īl’s view, this was the period of the greatest economic expansion and intellectual enlightenment in the history of the medieval Islamic World, when the urban middle class was at the peak of its socio-economic, political and cultural influence.⁶ From the late eleventh century onwards, feudalism once again became the dominant mode of production in the Islamic World while the bourgeois mode was relegated to secondary status. The urban bourgeoisie declined in importance while nomadic groups entered the Islamic lands such as the Seljuks in the Near East, the Banū Hilāl in Ifrīqīya, and the Almoravids in the far West. Regimes of a military-feudal character eventually took root throughout much of the Islamic World while important trade routes in the Mediterranean fell under the domination of European maritime powers.⁷

According to Ismā‘īl, a thorough study of the socio-economic bases of Islamic history in a given period is a prerequisite to contextualizing and

⁴ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 1, p. 30.

⁵ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 1, pp. 147-184.

⁶ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 105-187.

⁷ Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl, “Al-Iqtā‘ fī al-‘Alam al-Islāmī, min Muntaṣaf al-Qarn al-Khāmis ilā Awā‘il al-Qarn al-‘Ashir al-Hijrī: bayn al-Jadal al-Nazarī wa al-Wāqi‘ al-Tārīkhī,” *Hawliyat Kulliyat al-Ādāb* 11, (1990) pp. 9-87, esp. pp. 25-40.

understanding the political, religious, and intellectual developments of the same period. This approach is exemplified in the second part of the above-mentioned *Sociology of Islamic Thought* in which the author commences his account of what he calls the period of “Bourgeois Revival” (mid-tenth to mid-eleventh century A.D.) with a careful study of the “economic bases” which include land tenure, agriculture, manufacturing, and trade. This is followed by a consideration of the “Social Structure” which discusses the social classes that he divides into aristocracy, bourgeoisie and oppressed classes (peasants, slaves, urban poor). The third section is called “Sociology of Political History” which gives a sketch of the major political-ideological movements of the period and how the class struggle played out at the level of political history. After sketching the socio-economic conditions and their political ramifications, he delves into a discussion of the superstructure, the cultural and intellectual history of the period. This includes chapters on the natural sciences, the traditional or religious sciences (such as Qur’ān exegesis, traditions of the Prophet, jurisprudence), literature and philology, art and architecture, theology and philosophy, mysticism and finally a detailed discussion of the historical and geographical sciences during the period under study.⁸

Ismā‘īl maintains the principle of the “unity of the phenomenon in Islamic history” according to which both the Maghrib and the Mashriq passed through the same feudal or bourgeois phases at approximately the same time.⁹ He treats the movements of medieval Western European military expansion in the Mediterranean Basin, including the Reconquista, the Norman conquest of Sicily, and the Crusades, as related phenomena. In his view there was a complex interaction between these and other “external factors” on the one hand and various socio-economic “internal developments” of the Islamic world on the other hand that resulted in the decline of the middle class and the entrenchment of feudalism in the Islamic lands.¹⁰

The Period of “Reactionary Feudalism”

The first Western European Christian advances against the Islamic world coincided with what Ismā‘īl calls the period of “Reactionary Feudalism” in Islamic history, between the middle of the ninth and the middle of the tenth

⁸ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vols. 2-5.

⁹ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, p. 27.

¹⁰ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 188-204.

centuries. According to Ismā‘īl, the Islamic bourgeoisie was primarily mercantile in character and heavily dependent on the central government which controlled the trade routes, in contrast to its European counterpart which was closely tied to the productive sector and had interests that were antithetical to those of the government. Therefore, the Islamic bourgeoisie was exceptionally sensitive to changes in the international balance of power, which affected the trade routes, and to changes in the power structure at home, particularly the seizure of power by nomadic groups that formed military aristocracies.¹¹

In Al-Andalus this period witnessed the fragmentation of the territory of the Umayyad amirate of Cordoba and the development of Berber, Arab and Slav factions in the military. On the external front the Norsemen launched devastating raids against the Iberian Peninsula beginning in 844. The Franks and the local Christian powers in the Iberian Peninsula such as Asturias and Leon took advantage of the temporary disunity and weakness on the Muslim side to invade al-Andalus and conquer Muslim territories in the frontier zone.¹²

In the Eastern and Central Mediterranean, Byzantium experienced a resurgence of military and naval power under the Macedonian dynasty (856-1056) while the Abbasid caliphate was greatly weakened during the period of the ascendancy of the Turkic slave soldiers due to palace conspiracies and major revolutionary movements such as the Zanj Revolt (late ninth century) and the Qarmatian Revolt (early tenth century).¹³

The Aghlabid state in Ifrīqiya became destabilized in the late ninth century due to the struggle between the African slave soldiers (*Sūdān*) imported by the rulers and the Arab *jund*. The latter were eventually exterminated by the African corps which played the same disruptive role that the Turkic guard played in Abbasid Iraq. They alienated the civilian population through their brutality and rapaciousness while the Aghlabid rulers isolated themselves from the masses of Qayrawān, taking refuge in the new administrative city of Raqqāda.¹⁴ Regional revolts flared while conflict with other North African dynasties like the Rustamids of the Central Maghrib jeopardized the overland

¹¹ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 15-16.

¹² Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 18-20.

¹³ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 17, 22.

¹⁴ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, p. 22.

trade routes. The resulting economic decline was reflected in the debasement of the late Aghlabid coinage.¹⁵

The Aghlabids progressively conquered Sicily from the Byzantines between 827 and 902 and also established footholds on the Italian mainland. Ismā'īl points out that their progress in the Sicilian campaign was directly linked to the situation in Ifrīqīya. Whenever the Aghlabids were preoccupied with civil wars or revolts in North Africa, they neglected the Sicilian front where their advance was stalled or even partially reversed. This explains why the conquest took seventy years.¹⁶ The maritime situation of the Christian powers in the Central Mediterranean improved during this period. The resurgence of Byzantine naval activity in the region beginning in the late ninth century, after a period of weakness in the earlier part of the century, played a major role in this. The Byzantines enjoyed several victories in Sicily during the 870s and 880s, though ultimately they were unable to prevent the fall of the island.¹⁷ On the Italian mainland, they were more successful. The Byzantine navy played a decisive role in the capture of Bari, the main Aghlabid base in Italy, by the forces of the Carolingian emperor Louis II in 871.¹⁸

The collapse of the Aghlabid state in the first decade of the tenth century at the hands of the Kutāma rebels significantly weakened the position of the Muslims in the Central Mediterranean region for several years until the Fatimids managed to consolidate power in Ifrīqīya and Sicily and establish a formidable navy. The Byzantines and the Italian maritime states were quick to exploit periods of weakness and disorder by launching direct raids on the North African coastline. Such attacks threatened the important east-west trade routes, both maritime and land-based, which connected Ifrīqīya to Egypt, as well as the maritime routes which linked Sicily to North Africa. The extensive network of coastal fortifications, notably the fortified monasteries (*rubūt*) which were constructed in Aghlabid Ifrīqīya, testify to the gravity of the danger posed by such raids.¹⁹ In Ismā'īl's view, the disruption of the major international sea and land trade routes, coupled with the ascendancy of an expensive and turbulent foreign-born mercenary army at home along with

¹⁵ Ismā'īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 48-49.

¹⁶ Maḥmūd Ismā'īl, *Al-Aghālība 184 h – 296 h: Sīyāsatuhum al-Khārījīya* (Cairo: Ein for Human and Social Sciences, 2000) pp. 159-160.

¹⁷ Ismā'īl, *Al-Aghālība*, pp. 157-158.

¹⁸ Ismā'īl, *Al-Aghālība*, pp. 176-177.

¹⁹ Ismā'īl, *Al-Aghālība*, pp. 148-149.

the rise of regional warlords, were all factors which served to weaken the mercantile bourgeoisie and strengthen feudal tendencies.

The Second “Bourgeois Awakening” in the Islamic World

According to Ismā‘īl, this feudal dominance was temporary, soon giving way to the second and most important “bourgeois awakening” in Islamic history which lasted from approximately the middle of the tenth century until the middle of the eleventh century. He considers this period to have been the time of the greatest economic expansion and intellectual enlightenment in the history of the medieval Islamic World, when the urban middle class was at the peak of its socio-economic, political and cultural influence. The trend towards political decentralization and fragmentation was reversed and three great “bourgeois-influenced states” (the Arabic term used is *mutabarjaza*, meaning literally “bourgeoisised”) arose: the Buwayhids in Iraq and western Iran (945–1055), the Fatimids in the Maghrib and later Egypt and Syria (909–1171), and the Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba (929–1031). Ismā‘īl uses the term “bourgeois-influenced” because although the bourgeoisie did not actually assume direct power in any of these states, the bourgeoisie dominated the bureaucracies and institutions of the states and its attitudes influenced the ruling aristocracy.²⁰

The Fatimid caliphate in Ifrīqīya and the revived Umayyad caliphate that ‘Abd al-Raḥmān III had established in Cordoba were both formidable naval powers. Despite their conflicts with each other, they managed to arrest the naval expansion of the Christian maritime states in the Western and Central Mediterranean and forced them once more onto the defensive. There was a lack of unity between the Byzantines, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Italian city-states, and indeed several of the latter entered into trade agreements with the Fatimids. Major international trade routes of the time were under the domination of the bourgeois-influenced Muslim empires. For instance, the maritime routes between Ifrīqīya, Sicily and Egypt, the trans-Saharan routes, and the Red Sea trade were controlled by the Fatimids and their vassals. Despite political disunity within the Islamic world, merchants traveled with relative freedom between states.²¹

²⁰ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 151–155, 200.

²¹ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 175–177.

The Final Victory of Feudalism

In Ismā‘īl’s periodization of Islamic history, the second bourgeois flowering came to an end in the late eleventh century as reactionary feudalism gradually became entrenched across the Islamic World and has remained so down to modern times. According to him, there were two, mutually reinforcing causes for the decline of the Islamic bourgeoisie and of the “bourgeoisised” states that it influenced (the Fatimid, Buyid, and Cordoban Umayyad states). The first cause was the seizure of power in the centers of civilization by semi-nomadic peripheral groups led by military aristocracies that instituted feudal regimes in order to pay their followers. The prime examples of such regimes were the Seljuks in the eastern Islamic world and the Almoravids in the Maghrib and al-Andalus. Ismā‘īl likens them to the “external proletariat” described by Arnold Toynbee and maintains that their role in medieval Islamic history was similar to that of the Germanic tribes in late Roman history. He notes that in both cases they were invited by weak rulers who required their military assistance: the Almoravids into al-Andalus by the *Mulūk al-Ṭawā’if* in order to stem the Christian advance, and the Seljuks by the powerless ‘Abbāsid caliphs. The second factor was an external one, the loss of control by the major Islamic powers over the sea routes that were critically important to international trade and the decline of their role as intermediaries in such trade. A notable example of the latter was the monopolization of commerce between the eastern and western halves of the Mediterranean by the Italian merchant fleets in the twelfth century, whereas previously this trade had been conducted in Muslim vessels.²²

Fatimid decline began in the reign of the caliph al-Mustaṣṣir (1036-1094). According to Ismā‘īl, Byzantine land and naval victories over the Fatimids in Syria during the eleventh century weakened the Fatimid position in the Eastern Mediterranean and paved the way for the Crusaders who arrived at the end of the century and succeeded in completely expelling the Fatimids from Bilād al-Shām. During the last years of Fatimid rule they invaded Egypt itself, intervening in Fatimid civil wars, while Byzantine and Italian fleets raided the Egyptian ports. In the Central Mediterranean the Normans conquered Sicily between 1061 and 1091 while the Genoese and Pisans sacked the Zirid capital at al-Mahdiyya in 1087. In the 1140s the Normans directly occupied al-Mahdiyya and most of the other major ports in Ifrīqiya. As a consequence, European maritime powers, particularly Pisa, Genoa, and

²² Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā* vol. 2, p. 22; 188-204.

Venice, came to dominate the principal trade routes in the Central and Eastern Mediterranean from which the vessels of Muslim states were now largely excluded. Not only was trade between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean in European hands, but even trade between the Maghrib and Mashriq was now nearly monopolized by the ships of the Italian republics.²³ According to Ismā‘īl, the Red Sea trade also declined in the eleventh and twelfth centuries due to the Hilālī Arab tribes which threatened communications between the Red Sea ports and the Nile Valley, Fatimid loss of control over Yemen and the Hijaz, and piracy in the Indian Ocean.²⁴

The Zirids of Ifrīqīya were vassals of the Fatimid caliphs who played an important role in securing the overland trade routes between Ifrīqīya and Egypt as well as the trans-Saharan routes that supplied the Fatimid economy with gold and luxury imports from West Africa. During the early part of the reign of the caliph al-Mustanşir, the Zirids threw off their allegiance to the Fatimid caliphate and recognized instead the Abbasid caliphs of Baghdad. Ismā‘īl maintains the traditional narrative of a Hilālī invasion of Ifrīqīya in the 1050s according to which the Fatimid vizier instigated the tribes of the Banū Hilāl, who were then settled in Upper Egypt, to invade Ifrīqīya in order to punish the refractory Zirid ruler al-Mu‘izz b. Bādīs as well as to relieve Egypt from the presence of these turbulent bedouin.²⁵ They defeated the Zirid army and sacked Qayrawān, the greatest city in Ifrīqīya. In subsequent decades further waves of pastoralist Arab tribes arrived in Ifrīqīya from Egypt, including the Banū Sulaym. These tribes spread westwards into the Central and Western Maghrib. Ismā‘īl accepts the opinion held by many, though not all modern historians, that the Hilālī and Sulaymī migrations had far-reaching and negative effects on the economies of Ifrīqīya and the Central Maghrib, leading to a decline in agriculture and settled life and the spread of pastoralism. In his view the Hilālī invasion was also responsible for cutting the overland trade routes between Ifrīqīya and Egypt and for disrupting the trans-Saharan trade, thus depriving the Fatimid economy of West African gold among other products.²⁶

²³ Ismā‘īl, "Al-Iqtā‘", pp. 26-28.

²⁴ Ismā‘īl, "Al-Iqtā‘", p. 29; Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 190-191.

²⁵ For alternative views on the Banū Hilāl see Michael Brett, *Ibn Khaldun and the Medieval Maghrib* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999); Jean Poncet, "Le mythe de la catastrophe hilalienne," *Annales* 22, no. 5 (1967) pp. 1099-1120.

²⁶ Ismā‘īl, "Al-Iqtā‘", pp. 26-27.

The loss of trade revenues coupled with natural disasters and social disturbances in the eleventh century caused the collapse of the Egyptian economy. In order to suppress rebellions and fight civil wars, the leading actors in the Fatimid state turned to various peripheral groups such as the Turks, Armenians, Arabs, and Sūdān. Since they could no longer pay salaries for the soldiers, they had to give them *iqṭā'āt* (grants of land, or of income from specific lands), thus laying the foundations for feudalism in Ismā'īl's view.²⁷ During the final years of Fatimid rule, rival viziers invited into Egypt first the army of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem, and then the Kurdish and Turkic forces of the Zankids. Eventually Saladin, the leader of the Zankid expeditionary force in Egypt, seized the reins of power for himself and established the Ayyubid dynasty, which was a feudal-military state in Ismā'īl's opinion.²⁸

In the far west of the Islamic world as well, the centralized, bourgeois-influenced regime of the Cordoba Caliphate rapidly disintegrated after 1009. The provinces fell under the rule of local warlords while class-warfare broke out in Cordoba itself between the commoners and the military aristocracy. As in Egypt, the military aristocrats had recourse to mercenary troops drawn from semi-nomadic peripheral groups, in this case the Berbers and Slavs, in order to suppress the revolts of the commoners and to fight against each other. The cost of maintaining mercenary armies created a spiral-effect as unbearable taxation measures were imposed on the civilian population, while the foreign soldiers took to plundering and looting them, thus leading to more popular revolts. When the treasury was empty there was no option but to assign the soldiers grants of land as substitution for a salary. The caliphate was succeeded in due course by the local petty rulers known as the *Mulūk al-Ṭawā'if*, whose reigns marked the return of feudalism and warlordism to al-Andalus. They drew the Christian kingdoms in the north of Spain into their squabbles and the latter exploited the situation to make impressive conquests at the expense of the Muslims, as witnessed by the capture of Toledo in 1085.²⁹ Meanwhile, in Ismā'īl's estimation, al-Andalus' international trade declined in the eleventh century due to the Norman conquests in the Central

²⁷ Many historians, most notably Claude Cahen, reject the use of the term feudal to describe medieval Islamic societies, believing that feudalism had a uniquely western European context. For more on the Islamic feudalism debate see Baadj, "Maḥmūd Ismā'īl", pp. 162-164.

²⁸ Ismā'īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 190-192.

²⁹ Ismā'īl, "Al-Iqṭā'", pp. 37-38; Ismā'īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 193-196.

Mediterranean and the accompanying monopolization of the East-West and North-South Mediterranean trade routes by European maritime powers, as well as the seizure of the westernmost trans-Saharan route by the Sanḥāja Berbers.³⁰

Eventually the rulers of the Andalusī petty states had no option left but to invite the Almoravids from North Africa into the Iberian Peninsula in order to save themselves from the Christian advance, just as the last Fatimids invited the Zankids into Egypt in order to counterbalance the Crusaders. The Almoravids, like the Seljuks and later the Ayyubids in the east, created a military-feudal regime in which the army was supported by land grants. The Almohad and Merinid dynasties which succeeded the Almoravids in the far west of the Islamic World continued to be organized on a feudal basis.³¹ According to ‘Abd al-‘Umar, one of Ismā‘īl’s students, the results of such a long period of feudal rule in the Maghrib were the marginalization of the middle class or bourgeoisie, which was subsumed into the common class, an absence of strong institutions, and political fragmentation. He believes that the internal structural weaknesses caused by feudalism led to external weakness at the end of the Middle Ages when the North African polities proved incapable of competing with the European nation-states and eventually fell to them as colonies, just as the Muslim polities in al-Andalus had fallen to the Spanish monarchy in an earlier period.³²

Finally, in the eastern half of the Islamic world the bourgeois-influenced Buwayhid state in Mesopotamia and Iran was also affected by changes in the international trade routes. According to Ismā‘īl, the Persian Gulf trade, which was of vital importance to the Buwayhid economy, declined towards the end of the eleventh century. In the Far East the Chinese monopolized maritime trade between China and India, excluding Muslim shipping, while Indian pirates disrupted trade between India and the Gulf. Meanwhile, within the Gulf itself pirates from the island of Qays (Kīsh) ravaged the coastal ports and the leading Buwayhid port of Sīrāf was abandoned. The commercial expansion of the Italian city-states into the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea and the Byzantine revival also negatively affected Buwayhid trade. Overland trade along the Silk Road that had previously passed through

³⁰ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 6, p. 33.

³¹ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 6, pp. 34-36.

³² Muḥammad ‘Abd al-‘Umar, “Al-Iqtā‘ wa Atharuhu al-Siyāsī wa al-Ijtīmā‘ī fī al-Maghrib Khilāl ‘Aṣray al-Murābiṭīn wa al-Muwaḥḥidīn” (PhD thesis, ‘Ayn Shams, 2007) especially pp. 278-287.

Baghdad now bypassed Iraq and was redirected instead to Constantinople through Asia Minor or further north to the Volga.³³

Ismā‘īl believes that the decline in trade caused a decrease in tax revenue, forcing the government to raise taxes and duties, oppressing the already troubled merchants and craftsmen. This caused class conflict to break out in Baghdad and the other Iraqi cities. Ismā‘īl identifies three parties to this conflict: the commoners or *‘ayyārūn*, the bourgeois movement which he believes was led by al-Basāsirī (d. 1060) and the military aristocracy which relied on Turkic mercenaries to fight the other factions. The Abbasid caliph turned for help to a nomadic tribal confederation from the periphery, that of the Seljuk Turks, inviting their ruler Tughril Beg (1037-1063) to Baghdad in 1055. Tughril returned to Baghdad in 1060 when he defeated al-Basāsirī and permanently annexed Iraq to the Seljuk Empire, which expanded to embrace most of the Near East. In Ismā‘īl’s opinion the Seljuk state was a feudal military empire of a federal nature.³⁴

Conclusion

As we have seen, Ismā‘īl treats the Reconquista in Iberia, the early medieval expansion of the Normans and the Italian city-states in the Central Mediterranean, and the Crusades in the Near East as related phenomena. He goes further than most historians however in mentioning such events in the same sentence as piracy in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean as well as Chinese exclusion of shipping and merchants from Muslim lands along the maritime routes between China and India. He considers all of these events to have been external factors which contributed to the loss of control of international trade routes by the major Muslim empires and thereby contributed to the weakness of the largely mercantile bourgeoisie in the Islamic world. However, these external factors alone did not drive socio-economic developments in the Islamic world but only in tandem with other internal factors. There is little discussion of religious or other ideological factors behind the Medieval Mediterranean Muslim-Christian conflicts in Ismā‘īl’s work. The major significance of all of these conflicts for him is how they resulted in changes in the flow of international trade.

There are a number of criticisms that can be made of the model of medieval Islamic history that Ismā‘īl has presented. It seems at times that he tries too

³³ Ismā‘īl, “Iqtā’”, pp. 29-30.

³⁴ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 164-166.

hard to fit disparate events that occurred in far-flung regions under very different circumstances into an overly-rigid periodization. For example, during the so-called “feudal resurgence” of the late ninth and early tenth centuries, while there certainly were severe political and social crises in al-Andalus and in the Abbasid Near East at this time, the evidence of a crisis in Ifrīqīya during this period is less clear. It was precisely in the late ninth century that the Aghlabids completed the conquest of Sicily, and the transition from Aghlabid to Fatimid rule did not result in any weakening of the Muslim position in the Central Mediterranean, though this may simply have been due to the weakness and divisions of the Christian states in the Italian Peninsula which were unable to exploit the Aghlabid collapse in the way that the Christians of northern Spain were able to exploit the crisis of the Umayyad amirate in Cordoba.

The concept of the “nomadic peripheral peoples” as a Toynbean “external proletariat” who invariably created feudal-military regimes once they seized power in the imperial center also deserves further consideration. Ismā‘īl gives as prime examples of this phenomenon the Almoravids in al-Andalus and the western Maghrib and the Seljuks in the Near East. However, it should be borne in mind that two of Ismā‘īl’s “bourgeois-influenced” regimes were also created by tribal pastoral groups from the peripheries that were considered uncivilized by their neighbours, namely the Buwayhids who were Daylamites from a remote mountainous region of Iran near the Caspian Sea, and the Fatimids who owed their rise in Ifrīqīya to the support of the Kutāma tribes that inhabited the mountainous country around Jijel in eastern Algeria. It should be noted as well that the conventional view of most contemporary historians is that the military *iqṭā‘* system (which Ismā‘īl equates with feudalism) began not with the Seljuks but rather under the Buwayhids.³⁵ If one accepts that there was indeed feudalism in the medieval Islamic world, it is hard to see why the period of the Daylamite Buwayhids, warlike mountaineers who rewarded their followers with *iqṭā‘āt* and divided their “empire” into several appanages each governed by a different line of princes in the manner of a loose confederation, should be seen as the antithesis of feudalism while their successors, the Seljuks, a nomadic steppe people who governed their state in much the same loose manner as the Buwayhids by

³⁵ For example, see Sato Tsugitaka, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1997) p. 6.

dividing it into principalities, should be blamed for the final “feudal resurgence”.³⁶

Finally, Ismā‘īl makes very interesting observations about the possible effects that piracy in the Indian Ocean and Chinese commercial competition with the Islamic world may have had on socio-economic developments in the latter. Unfortunately his references are to older secondary works by such scholars as Heyd, Metz and Cahen who themselves were not specialists in the civilizations of the Far East.³⁷ It would be most beneficial to have a joint team of Islamicists, Indologists, and Sinologists undertake a careful and detailed study of economic and trade relations between China, India, and the Islamic World during the period between the eighth and thirteenth centuries relying on the latest numismatic and archeological evidence as well as all available primary sources.

³⁶ Most contemporary historians, especially in the west, have great reservations about the use of the term feudal to describe non-European civilizations. For more on the controversy regarding feudalism in the Islamic world see Baadj, “Maḥmūd Ismā‘īl”, pp. 162-164.

³⁷ Ismā‘īl, *Sūsiyūlūjīyā*, vol. 2, pp. 17, 43, 109-114.

REMEMBERING AND IMAGINING THE INVASION: A THREAT TO THE MUSLIM SACRED SPACES IN ARABIC FOLK EPICS

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Abstract

The inclusion of narratives about the struggle for key Islamic sacred spaces such as Jerusalem and Mecca in tribal stories and tales, which formed the basis for folk epics, indicates the great importance of the concept of protecting these holy places in medieval Arab folk culture and can be seen as a repercussion of the Crusades. In these epics, when a Christian leader is said to be “making a pilgrimage” to Jerusalem, he typically brings a large army and often states his intention to conquer this sacred site. The epics also focus on the importance of Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Christians. It is important to note that prior to the Crusades, there was almost no precedent for Christian capture of the significant Muslim holy sites. However, during the Crusades Jerusalem, with its sacred shrines, was captured by Western European Christian forces and the Crusaders later posed a military threat against Mecca and Medina. These historical developments eventually became imprinted in the folk imagination of the peoples of the Near East.

Introduction: Scholarly Debate

Sacred space as such is a common subject of research by cultural anthropologists and scholars of religion, starting with the works of Mircea Eliade, who theoretically substantiated the cultural and social importance of

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the spatial manifestation of the sacred.¹ The processes of endowing space with sacredness and depriving it of this status, along with the mechanisms of re-sacralization, constitute an important element in the creation and maintenance of a group (local, national or religious) identity. These mechanisms imply the division of space, both real and imaginary, into “us” and “them”, along with the “sacred” and “profane”, being utilized as weapons in confrontations between imagined communities. In these processes, an important role is played not only by specific ritual actions, but also by historical and quasi-historical narratives that form discourses associated with sacred places. The complexity of these processes determines the importance of studying the perception of various sacred spaces by different communities.

For many centuries, the history of the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula was marked by rivalry for control over sacred spaces between representatives of various faiths, and this confrontation continues to this day.² Most previous studies concerning sacred spaces in the Levant are either devoted to episodes of the sacralization of space in the early Islamic period, following the Arab conquest of Palestine (seventh to ninth centuries AD),³ or to the contemporary period with an emphasis on the role of sacred spaces in the Arab-Israeli conflict.⁴

The study of the perception of sacred spaces in the cultural memory of the inhabitants of the region will provide a better understanding of the processes of formation of the identities of the modern inhabitants of the Levant and adjacent regions. In this context it is crucial to note that most of the previous works analyzing the existence of sacred spaces in this region are primarily

¹ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1987), 20-23.

² Benjamin Z. Kedar, R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (eds.), *Sacred Space: Shrine, City, Land. Proceedings of the International Conference in Memory of Joshua Prawer* (London: McMillan Press Ltd, 1998).

³ See, Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship - Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1995); Jacob Lassner, *Medieval Jerusalem: Forging an Islamic city in spaces sacred to Christians and Jews* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

⁴ See, Marshall J. Breger, Yitzhak Reiter (eds.), *Sacred Space in Israel and Palestine - Religion and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2012); Wendy Pullan, Maximilian Sternberg, Lefkos Kyriacou, *The Struggle for Jerusalem's Holy Places* (London: Routledge, 2014); Yitzhak Reiter, *Contested Holy Places in Israel-Palestine: Sharing and Conflict Resolution* (London: Routledge, 2017).

devoted to social and historical aspects and do not pay due attention to the role of semiotics and imagery in shaping the identities of these communities. The majority of these studies belong to the category of so-called case-studies dedicated to the history and culture of the Holy Land in certain historical periods.⁵

One of the most important periods in the history of the Levant, marked by the struggle for sacred space and its re-sacralization, was the era of the Crusades. There are a number of studies that analyze the perception of sacralization and re-sacralization of space and the struggles over it both in the works of scholars who were contemporaries of the Crusades and in those of Muslim historians and theologians who lived after the end of the Crusades. However, the memory of non-elite groups about this aspect of the Crusades remains understudied. Furthermore, the studies on the identity of the Arab population of the Levant hardly touch on the topics of the sacralization of space and the stigmatization of its loss in the folk culture of the late Middle Ages and the early Modern Period.⁶ For such reasons, a number of researchers consider it important to make use of the medieval and early modern Arabic folk epics to study this issue.

Carole Hillenbrand, in her study of the Muslim perspectives of the Crusades, emphasizes the importance of such a view from below:

As in other areas of medieval history, a major gap in our knowledge of the social aspects of the Crusades is the perspective of the ordinary people, of course, their lives rarely come under the scrutiny of the chroniclers, who are almost exclusively concerned with the narrowly defined ruling echelons of society. It is therefore necessary to investigate other spheres of Islamic culture in order to try to find more information about how the ordinary people felt about the Crusades. [...]. What is clear, however, is that this literature is a vast and largely untapped source of popular

⁵ See, Oded Peri, *Christianity under Islam in Jerusalem: The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Vincent Lemire, *Jerusalem 1900: The Holy City in the Age of Possibilities*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁶ See, Haim Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Meir Litvak, *Palestinian Collective Memory and National Identity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

attitudes, beliefs and stories which helped to create Muslim stereotypes of the Franks.⁷

The same point of view is shared by Malcolm Lyons in his study on the Crusades' legacy in Arabic popular literature. Speaking about our modern knowledge of the history of the Crusades, he notes that:

We may be better acquainted with the form of the period rather than its spirit, its statics rather than its dynamics. [...]. But if evidence from the missing level is to be found at all, then this is perhaps its only plausible source.⁸

Jonathan Phillips also emphasizes the importance of folk epics for the study of the survival of the memory of the Crusades in the Arab World:

A number of the writers discussed below worked during the Mamluk era and it is not surprising that Baibars featured prominently therein. He was also the subject of an epic narrative, an immensely popular genre, with the *Sirat al-Baibars* widely presented down the centuries. A western visitor to Cairo in the 1830s observed around thirty street performers recounting Baibars' life in this way. Such stories were primarily works of entertainment, but they can be seen as transmitting preoccupations and stereotypes.⁹

Among the studies of the Arabic epics related to the Crusades, it is necessary to note the chapters devoted to the perception of Europe by Muslims: "The Land of War: Europe in the Arab Hero Cycles"¹⁰ by Malcolm

⁷ Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) 263, 266-267.

⁸ Malcolm Lyons, "The Crusading Stratum in the Arabic Hero Cycles" in *Crusaders and Muslims in twelfth-century Syria*, 147-161, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 148.

⁹ Jonathan Phillips, *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 332.

¹⁰ Malcolm Lyons, "The Land of War: Europe in the Arab Hero Cycles" in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2001), 41-51.

Lyons and “Exploring Europe through Medieval Islamic Folk Literature”¹¹ by Niall Christie. These studies, however, are focused precisely on the idea of the land of the Franks (*bilād al-ifranj*) as a geographical locus and the connection of the adventures described in the Epics with real historical events.

Alex Mallett, in the introduction to his study of the perception of the Crusades by their Muslim contemporaries, when reviewing sources, notes:

As well as historical works, there are a number of other genres of Arabic sources that are useful for this study. Religious texts, travel literature, folktales and others provide a rich mine of further information and provide evidence from areas of society that are not usually recorded in purely historical sources. However, these texts have many of the same problems of the historical works, as they were written by the same educated, religious classes and consequently are focused, once again, on either the author’s own class or their superiors in society, and carry the same prejudices.¹²

This clarification about the elite component in folk literature seems to us only partly fair, since although folk epics were considerably influenced by the contemporary historiography, the historical narratives in them were reinterpreted and significantly altered by folk storytellers, acquiring new details and changing their structure under the logic of the narrative. These works were appealing to the common people, while elite groups considered the popular epics to be “stupid and unworthy of attention”, in the words of Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), who severely criticized them.¹³ At the same time, it is important to note that although the popular Arabic epics can be used (with due care) to study the perception of the Crusades by those who witnessed them, they also remain the most important source for studying the

¹¹ Niall Christie, “Exploring Europe through Medieval Islamic Folk Literature” in *The Historian of Islam at Work. Essays in Honor of Hugh N. Kennedy* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 503-520.

¹² Alex Mallett, *Popular Muslim Reactions to the Franks in the Levant, 1097–1291* (London: Routledge, 2016): 8.

¹³ Roger Allen, D. S. Richards (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature, Vol. 6: Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 260.

preservation of the memory of the era of the Crusades in the Middle East, especially during the period between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The main goal of this article is to study the image of the struggle for sacred spaces between the Arab/Muslim epic heroes and their Christian rivals, the Franks (*Ifranj*) and Byzantines (*Rūm*), in Arabic folk epics. This article also complements the author's previous study on the patterns of preservation of the Arab memory of the Crusades.¹⁴

The sources for this study are the folk epics *Sīrat ʿAntara ibn Shaddād* (Life of ʿAntara ibn Shaddād),¹⁵ *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* (Life of the Banū Hilāl tribe),¹⁶ *Taghrībat Banī Hilāl* (The Western Migration of Banī Hilāl tribe), *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* (Story of al-Zīr Sālim), *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* (Life of Dhāt al-Himma)¹⁷ and *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* (Life of al-Zāhir Baybars).¹⁸ The choice of these works is due to their great distribution and popularity in the Levant and Egypt in the late Middle Ages and the Modern Age, which was unanimously noted by European travelers and researchers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁹ In the examples from the texts of the epics presented in this article, typos made in printed versions have been corrected and grammatical features have been preserved (some of them are specified in the footnotes).

¹⁴ Oleg Sokolov, "The Memory of the Crusades in the Arabic Folk Epics: Images and Patterns," *Vostok (Oriens)*, no. 6 (2022), 172–181.

¹⁵ ʿAntara b. Shaddād (presumably 525–608 AD) was the famous pre-Islamic Arabian poet and adventurer; he was the author of one of the prestigious *muʿallaqāt* poems.

¹⁶ The Banū Hilāl tribe were a confederation of Arab tribes originally from the Hejaz and Najd regions of Arabia who migrated to North Africa in the eleventh century. The Banū Hilāl epic cycle covers the history of the tribe from their residence in Arabia to their migration to North Africa through the Levant and Egypt. The legendary ancestor of the Banū Hilāl was the pre-Islamic hero al-Zīr Sālim (real name ʿUday b. Rabīʿa), nicknamed al-Muhalhil, the main character of the epic *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim* (Story of al-Zīr Sālim).

¹⁷ Fāṭima Dhāt al-Himma was the legendary Arab warrior of the early Abbasid period from the Banū Kilāb tribe.

¹⁸ Al-Zāhir Baybars (1223–1277) was the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, famous for his successful struggle against Mongols and Crusaders.

¹⁹ Oleg Sokolov, "Vanquishers of the Crusaders: Mujāhidūn Characters in Arabic Folk Epics" *Religions* 14, no. 8 (2023), 1042.

Religious Motivation and Zeal of the Franks (*Ifranj*) and Byzantines (*Rūm*)

In the Arabic folk epics, we see many examples of the crusading intentions of the Franks (*Ifranj*) and Byzantines (*Rūm*), represented by their aspirations for the victory of Christianity over other religions. This is expressed primarily in the fact that the main goals of the *Ifranj* are the conversion of all infidels to the true faith and the seizure of territories, including the capture and re-sacralization of sacred spaces belonging to other religious communities. The *Rūm* in most cases act in the same way, but there are also many examples where the Arabs help the *Rūm* against overly fanatical *Ifranj*.

A clear example of the focus of Christians on the spread of their faith by force in the epic literature is found in *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād*. In this epic the Christian leader Badramūṭ arrives at the court of the Byzantine ruler (*qayṣar*) of Antioch. He learns that the ruler pays tribute to the Sasanian Persian king Khosrow (*kisrā*), the fire-worshiper, and it is only thanks to this tribute that the *qayṣar* can rule the lands of the Levant (*al-Shām*). Badramūṭ says that this is absolutely unacceptable and it is necessary to wage war against Khosrow in order to show him the “true faith”:

And his feelings rioted, and he said: “[I swear] by the righteousness of Christ and the altar and the sacrificed one, I would not have said that there is in the world somebody, who does not worship Christ, and if this king is as you mentioned, then there is nothing left for us, but [to wage] a holy war and show him the true faith).²⁰

Thus, we are witnessing a call for a crusade-type expedition. At the same time, it is important to note that Khosrow is presented as a just and reasonable ruler, while Badramūṭ is portrayed as a rude and impudent person. When Badramūṭ arrives at Khosrow’s court and says that the Christians do not want to pay tribute and challenges the Persian army to battle, Khosrow reacts calmly:

²⁰ *Sīrat 'Antara ibn Shaddād* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-‘Arabiyya, [n.d.]), vol. 1, 261. *Wa-inza ‘aja ḥawāssuḥu wa-qāla wa-ḥaqq al-Masīḥ wa-l-madhbaḥ wa-l-dhabīḥ ma kuntu aqūlu anna fī al-dunyā man ya ‘budu ghayr al-masīḥ wa-in kāna hādḥā al-malik kamā dhakarta fa-mā baqiya ghayr al-jihād wa-izhār al-dīn al-ṣaḥīḥ.*

And when Khosrow heard these words from the interpreter, signs of anger appeared on his face, but he maintained his composure because he was a righteous king, and fairness returned him to prudence.²¹

Moreover, the sage ʿAmr in the court of Khosrow predicted the coming of Muḥammad and spent most of his time in Mecca. He also stated that the Persians and Arabs should stand together against other communities:

And it was from the vizier ʿAmr b. Nafīla, who was from the category of long-livers, who were waiting for the appearance of Muḥammad, peace be upon him, because he lived for five hundred years, and most of the time he spent in the Kaʿba.²²

Thus, in this episode the Christians invade from outside, encroaching on the inhabitants of the Levant and their religion. At the same time, the fire-worshippers (Zoroastrians) are presented here as the allies of the Arabs and their image is much more positive than the image of Christians, because the Zoroastrian king is presented as a noble ruler as opposed to a rude and fanatical Christian commander, while a wise seer anticipates the appearance of the prophet of the true faith. It can be assumed that the alliance of fire-worshippers and Arabs against an external enemy depicted here would have seemed to the medieval Arab audience as a kind of prototype of the Muslim Ummah opposing Christians attacking from outside of *dār al-islām* (The world of Islam).

In *Sīrat ʿAntara ibn Shaddād* there are also examples of the direct threats of the Franks to the sacred space of the Zoroastrians. For instance, in one of the episodes, the Byzantine emperor warns his Christian allies (the Ghassanids) that “the troops from different nations set out to the lands of *al-Shām*, all of them are from groups of different races of the Frankish invaders (*ṭawāʿif mukhtalifat al-ajnās min ghuzāt al-ifranj*)”.

²¹ *Sīrat ʿAntara*, vol. 1, 262. *Fa-lammā samiʿa kisrā min al-tarjumān hādhā al-kalām bāna fi wajhihi al-ghaḍab illā annahu mā aḡhara shayʿan min hādhā al-naṣb li-annahu kāna malikan ʿādilan wa-l-ʿadl yarudduhu ilā al-ṣawāb.*

²² *Sīrat ʿAntara*, vol. 1, 258. *Wa-kāna hādhā li-wazīr ʿamrū ibn nafīla min jumlat al-muʿammarīn al-muntaẓirīn li-zuhūr sayyidinā muḥammad ṣallā al-lāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama li-annahu qad ʿāsha khamsumiʿat ʿām wa-kāna akthar maqāmīhi fi al-bayt al-ḡarām.*

And their leader is called al-Khīljān,²³ he is feared by men and jinn, and he is the one who conquered the islands of the seas, and he marched striving for the victory of the worshipers of the crosses and destruction of the houses/temples of fire.²⁴

Here we are faced with an example of the religious motivation of the Franks, whose goal is to capture and destroy the sacred places and objects of another religion in order to build their own places of worship over the ruins of the former. Another important example is the attack of the Christians against the Jews. Al-Zīr Sālim (known by the epithet of al-Muhalhil), the protagonist of the epic of the same name, finds himself in Beirut, which is governed by the Jewish ruler Ḥakmūn. The city is unexpectedly attacked by the king of the Rūm, Jupiter the Crusader (*birgīs al-ṣalībī*) and the protagonist helps repel the attack.²⁵ In this case, it is also important to note that when the ruler asks the hero what his name is, al-Muhalhil, not wanting to reveal his real name, answers:

My name is Monotheist, servant of the Great God, Lord of Moses and Abraham.²⁶

In this case, it is important to note that the monotheist hero bravely confronts the Christian invaders.²⁷ Thus, in this case we see yet another example of pre-Islamic alliance of representatives of the local Levantine religious communities (the pre-Islamic Arab monotheists and the Jews of Beirut) against the Christians invading the region “from the outside”²⁸.

Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars also emphasizes the religious nature of the confrontation with the antagonists of the epic. For example, it is emphasized

²³ In *Sīrat ‘Antara ibn Shaddād* there are two variants of this name: Khalijān and Khīljān.

²⁴ *Sīrat ‘Antara*, vol. 4, 202. *Wa-lahum muqaddam yuqālu lahu al-khīljān tafza ‘u minhu al-ins wa-l-jānn wa-huwa allaadhī fataha jazā’ir al-biḥār wa-kharaja yaṭlubu nuṣrat ‘ubād al-ṣulbān wa-yuhaddimu buyūt al-nīrān.*

²⁵ *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim al-Kabīr* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Jumhūriyya al-Miṣriyya, [n.d.]), 79–81.

²⁶ *Qiṣṣat al-Zīr Sālim*, 76. *Ismī muwaḥḥid wa-ana ‘abd al-ilāh al-‘azīm rabb Mūsā wa-Ibrāhīm.*

²⁷ Sokolov, “The Memory of the Crusades”, 176.

²⁸ Although the epic says that the attacking Christians came from Kisrawān (Mount Lebanon), it is crucial to note that they are Rūm, that is, an external element for the Muslim Middle East.

that the Frankish king challenges the legitimate Muslim religious authorities and does not respect them, and of course, does not fear God.

On our way [there is] a king from among the kings of the Franks, whose name is Faranjīl, but he is fierce and stubborn [...] he plunders the money of the Muslims and does not pay attention to the Commander of the Faithful and does not fear the authority of the Lord of the Worlds.²⁹

The epics also often talk about the desire of the Christians to seize all of the Muslim lands and convert all of the people to Christianity. For example, Leon (*Lawūn*), the ruler of Constantinople, having received a false report, thinks that his commander Luke (*Lūqā*) has defeated the Muslims. Based on this, he rejoices, saying that he will capture all Muslim lands and convert everyone to Christianity.

And at first the news came that Luke defeated the Muslims, and Leon said: “If Luke went [for this], he will conquer all the Muslim lands and turn the people of the world to the Christian faith and the Lord Christ will reward [him] for this intention”.³⁰

The Franks also often express the idea that what they need is the Christian Holy Land. In particular, in *Sīrat ‘Antara ibn Shaddād*, the King of the Franks, Khalijān, accuses the Byzantine emperor (Caesar) of laziness and lack of zeal in the war against the infidels, and promises to first defeat the Arabs, and then kill the emperor and rule the Holy Land on his own.

And to keep on this until I hasten his killing and rule the land of Christ after him and impose true justice there.³¹

²⁹ *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* (Cairo: al-Hay’ al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āmma li-l-Kitāb, 1996), vol. 1, 241. *Fī ṭarīqinā malik min mulūk al-ifranj yuqālu lahu faranjīl lakinnahu jabbār ‘anīd [...] yanhabu amwāl al-muslimīn wa-lā yubālī min amīr al-mu’minīn wa-lā yakhshā saṭwat rabb al-‘ālamīn.*

³⁰ *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma* (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Sha‘biyya, 1980–1981), vol. 1, 364. *Wa-kāna al-khabar waṣala min al-awwal anna lūqā huwa al-zāfir ‘alā al-muslimīn fa-qāla lāwūn innā lūqā law kharaja yamliku jamī‘ al-bilād al-islāmiyya wa yaruddu ahl al-arḍ ilā al-milla al-masīhiyya wa yuqābilu al-sayyid al-masīh bi-tilka al-niyya.*

³¹ *Sīrat ‘Antara*, vol. 4, 238. *Wa-lā azāla kadhālika ḥattā u ‘ajjila qatlahu wa-amlīka ba‘dahu bilād al-masīh wa-uzhira fihā al-‘adl al-ṣaḥīḥ.* The whole sentence starts with *‘awwaltu an ...*, that is why “azāla” ends with “a”.

‘Antara, however, kills Khalijān, to the delight of Caesar, and the Byzantines conclude a truce with the Arabs. In this example, it is also essential to emphasize that the Franks are depicted as the most fanatical of Christians, and that they are determined against all odds to conquer the Holy Land.³² Thus, we see that the confrontation with the *Ifranj* and *Rūm* in the epics is presented as having primarily a religious nature, and the capture of sacred spaces is essential for the Christians. Next, we will analyze episodes with threats to two holy cities: Jerusalem and Mecca.

A threat to Jerusalem

First of all, it should be noted that the epics regularly emphasize the special significance of Jerusalem for Muslims. For instance, in *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, the sinister character Shammās, who pretends to be a righteous Muslim, tells the Arab king Ṣaḥṣāḥ that he will go to Jerusalem to pray for the victory of the Muslims over the infidels.

Jerusalem, it is the place of martyrs and traces of pious and joyful ones, and I will meet there with righteous men and pray for your victory over the infidels.³³

The importance and sacredness of Jerusalem for Muslims is also emphasized in *Taghrībat Banī Hilāl*. During their journey through the Levant to North Africa, the Banū Hilāl visit the sacred spaces in Jerusalem.

They arrived at noble Jerusalem, where they visited the holy places.³⁴

It is also necessary to emphasize the importance of Jerusalem for the Christians, both *Ifranj* and *Rūm*, which comes across in various scenarios. One of the recurring patterns in this case is the story about a Frankish princess, who secretly converted to Islam. In *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, the Frankish princess, who allied with the Muslim heroes, uses pilgrimage as an opportunity to run away

³² Sokolov, “Vanquishers of the Crusaders”, 1042.

³³ *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 401. *Bayt al-maqdis wa-huwa maḥall al-shuhadā’ wa-āthār al-muta’abbidīn wa-l-su’adā’ wa-ajtami’u hunāka bi-l-ṣāliḥīn wa-ad’ū lakum bi-l-naṣr ‘alā al-kāfirīn.*

³⁴ *Taghrībat Banī Hilāl* (Beirut: Dār ‘Umar Abū al-Naṣr, 1971), 91. *Waṣalū ilā al-quḍs al-sharīf ḥaythu zārū al-amākin al-muqaddasa.*

with them, and the nobles of the realm fully support her desire to visit Jerusalem, confirming that it is obligatory for Christians.

Know that lady Zahr al-Bān asked from me [permission for] pilgrimage to noble Jerusalem, and what do you say about this?“, and they replied: “It is a duty for everyone.³⁵

In this context, we see the transfer of the Islamic concept of the obligatory *ḥajj* to Mecca to Christian realities.

Yet another Frankish princess from this epic, Narjīs, also wants to go to Jerusalem and asks her father about it.

And my desire, father, is to go to visit it [i.e. Jerusalem] and fill myself with its light.³⁶ And she set out to visit noble Jerusalem with sixty thousand knights.³⁷

In *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, ‘Uyūn, the daughter of one of the Christian kings, converts to Islam in a dream. Afterwards, she, together with the Muslim hero Ibrāhīm, who was earlier captured by the Franks, kills the king of the Franks Tardūd and his son Martīn. Then she temporarily turns Ibrāhīm into Tardūd, and herself into Martīn using the “mirror of transformation” (*mirayat al-inqilāb*). After that, in the palace, they play out a scene in order to escape without arousing the suspicion of the Franks:

She said: “Father, I intend to visit Jerusalem”, he said to him [in fact, to her as she was disguised]: “My son, I will prepare a ship for you”.³⁸

In *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, the protagonists Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb are captured by the Franks, but at first they manage to

³⁵ *Sīrat Banī Hilāl al-kubrā shal-shāmiyya al-aṣliyya* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Andalus, [n.d.]), 127. *I lamū bi-anna al-sitt zahr al-bān ṭalabat minnī al-ḥajj ilā al-quḍs al-sharīf fa-mādhā taqūlū bi-hādhā al-sha`n fa-ajābūhu hādhā fard`alā kull insān.*

³⁶ *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, 593. *Fa-murādī yā abī an arūḥa zawrahā wa amtali` bi-nūrihā.*

³⁷ *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, 594. *Wa innaha ṭala`at ilā ziyārat al-quḍs al-sharīf wa-ma`ahā sittīn alf fāris.*

³⁸ *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, vol. 5, 2812. *Qālat ya abī anā qaṣādī azūru al-quḍs qāla lahu yā waladī anā ujahhizu laka Markab.*

impersonate monks from Jerusalem and even convince a Frankish king to give them gifts for the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Al-Baṭṭāl says that he will not take the treasure for himself, but may take it for “his disciples and those who he left there”.

And if not for this I would not take anything from these offerings,
but we will spread them among the poor in the Church of the
Holy Sepulchre and those who are there, and the king thanked
him for that.³⁹

The epics also mention the naive ideas of Christians about the purifying and miraculous nature of the sacred spaces of Jerusalem. For example, in *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, Ḥamqān, a relative of the king of Tangier, deceives the king of Catalonia ‘Abd al-Masīḥ, convincing him to send his treasures to Jerusalem in order to ritually “purify” them. As a result, the hero steals the treasure, while ‘Abd al-Masīḥ is captured by Baybars. “Wash it in Saint Mary’s Pool⁴⁰ and purify it from the dirt and filth and [then] make armor for warriors from it”.⁴¹

In addition to this, there are stories in the epics about the Franks sacrificing Muslims in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The above-mentioned Muslim character Ibrāhīm in *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, who, thanks to the “mirror of transformation”, for some time begins to look like the king of the Franks, wants to escape from them on a ship with a Muslim crew, recently captured by the Franks. He tells the Franks that those Muslims are not to be killed, as he wants to sacrifice them in Jerusalem. And he said: “Those I will slaughter them as a sacrifice in the doorway of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre”.⁴²

Finally, the epics contain many examples of direct Christian threats to Jerusalem and attempts to capture it. For example, Carole Hillenbrand and Malcolm Lyons cite an instance of this scenario from *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*. The

³⁹ *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 807-809. *Wa-law lā hādhā mā kuntu akhadhtu shay’an min hādhīhi al-nudhūr wa lakīn nufarriqūhum ‘alā fuqarā’ al-qumāma wa-allādhīna yuqīmūna fīhā fa-shakarahu al-malik ‘alā dhālika*. Name mockery: qumāma (garbage) instead of qiyāma (resurrection).

⁴⁰ Saint Mary’s Pool - a spring in the Kidron Valley in Jerusalem, also known as “Fountain of the Virgin” or “Gihon Spring”.

⁴¹ *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, vol. 4, 2713-2714. *Ighsilhā min ‘ayn sulwān wa-ṭahhirhā min al-danas wa-l-najāsa wa iṣna ‘malābis li-l-‘asākīr minhā*.

⁴² *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, vol. 5, 2812. *Wa-qāla hā’ulā’i adhbāhūhum qurbān ‘alā bāb al-qumāma al-quḍsiyya*.

Frankish king Mīlās arrives, having been ordered in a dream to rescue Jerusalem from the hands of the Muslims and to “sit on the throne of Constantinople”. Emperor Armānūs comes to meet him, and the Frank, who has not risen to greet him, says: “You are like a son to me”, considering the emperor below himself in nobility and power.⁴³ After Mīlās, having appealed to all the Frankish countries and assembled a great army, passes through Constantinople on his way to the Levant, he is defeated and killed by the heroine of the epic, Dhāt al-Himma, “the mother of the warriors of the faith and the defender of the religion of Muhammad.” Later, Dhāt al-Himma is praised for saving Jerusalem from the infidel threat.⁴⁴

In *Sīrat ‘Antara ibn Shaddād*, the Frankish King Khīljān also sets out to attack Jerusalem with a large army, marching under countless banners and crosses.

And he set out to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and Saint Mary's Pool <...> And he sent a messenger to Khosrow with the words: “Get out of these lands, and if fear of our arrival grips your heart, then [you have nothing to do but to] worship Jesus the son of Mary and become our adherent, and destroy the temples of fire, and build churches and monastic cells instead of them”.⁴⁵

A Threat to Mecca

The supreme sacredness of Mecca for Muslims is also often emphasized in the Arabic epics. For instance, in *Sīrat ‘Antara ibn Shaddād*, the Byzantine emperor turns to ‘Antara for help and reports that the ruler of the Franks set out from their lands with four hundred thousand fighters (*kharaja min bilād al-ifranj fi arba ‘i mi’at alf qātil*). When ‘Antara learns that he will fight the Franks, he

⁴³ Malcolm Lyons, *The Arabian Epic. Heroic and Oral Story-Telling. Volume 3: Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 474-475.

⁴⁴ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades*, 265-266.

⁴⁵ *Sīrat ‘Antara*, vol. 4, 211. *Kharaja yaṭlubu al-ḥajj ilā bayt al-maqdis wa-‘ayn sulwān [...]. Wa-anfadha ilā kisrā rasūlan yaqūlu lahu irḥal min hādhihi al-bilād wa-in kāna qad dakhala fi qalbika min qudūminā faza ‘wa-illā ‘ud ilā ‘ibādat al-masiḥ bin maryam wa kun ladaynā tābi‘an wa-ihdim buyūt al-nīrān wa-ibni badlahā kana ‘īs wa-shawāmi‘.*

swears by Muslim sacred symbols from Mecca saying: “[I swear] by the Ka‘ba, Zamzam and Maqām [of Ibrāhīm], I will make them a tale among people”.⁴⁶

In the epics, there are also numerous stories about a direct threat to Mecca from Christians. In *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* the king of the *Rūm* wants to conquer Mecca. The ruler of Mecca, Qirdāb al-Sharīf b. Hāshim, composes a poem with a call upon the Banū Hilāl for help against the infidels. He said: “Came the disgusting king of Byzantines.⁴⁷ The disgusting [one] wants to fight heading for Mecca and its [neighboring] towns to destroy the land”.⁴⁸

In *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, the main antagonist ‘Uqbā promises King Manuel that they will capture Mecca, destroy the Ka‘ba and establish the Christian faith everywhere:

I will destroy the kingdom of the Abbasids [...] and there will not be a king on the Earth beside you and no faith except your faith [...] and you will march to Mecca and destroy the Ka‘ba, and [then] you will march to Yathrib with a thousand patricians⁴⁹ and demolish its walls.⁵⁰

In the same epic, there is another example of an attack on Mecca. The patrician Ibn Jurjīs went on a campaign against Muḥammad, wanting to turn the Ka‘ba into a church. He set off and marched for seven days until he stopped in a meadow. Looking at his army, he saw that it filled all the horizons, and he rejoiced and became proud of himself.

⁴⁶ *Sīrat ‘Antara*, vol. 8, 158. *Wa-qāla ‘antar wa-ḥaqq al-bayt al-ḥarām wa-zamzam wa-l-maqām la-aj’alannahum uḥdūtha bayna al-anām.*

⁴⁷ *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, 36. *Atā al-malik al-absha’ min al-rūm.*

⁴⁸ *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, 37. *Al-absha’ yaṭlubu al-qitāl qāsid ilā makka wa-kull bilādihā li-yukharriba al-arḍ.*

⁴⁹ Patrikios (πατρικιος) was one of the highest Byzantine titles. Etymologically, the word patrician is associated with the ancient Roman class of patricians (lat. *patricius*), but in the Byzantine context it had a completely different meaning. Unlike in Rome, where it was the highest title of the hereditary aristocracy, in Byzantium it was a title that was bestowed by the emperor and was not hereditary. In the West, this title was of greater importance, acquiring a connection with the high military rank of *magister militum*, the holders of which had the exclusive right to receive the title of patrician. From the eighth century onwards, the title of patrician was borne by the kings of the Franks.

⁵⁰ *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 887. *Sawfa ukharribu mulk banī al-‘abbās [...] wa-lā yabqā ‘alā wajh al-arḍ malik ghayruka wa-lā dīn siwā dīnika [...] wa tasīru ilā makka wa tuhaddimu al-bayt al-‘atīq wa-tasīru ilā yathrib bi-alf batrīq wa-tukharribu judrānahā.*

And he said: “I want to make the Ka ‘ba of the scorpion⁵¹ a church for the Byzantines despite the disagreement of our disparaged sage”, then he fell asleep being drunk from wine, and he saw in his dream that a door opened in the sky and a person descended from there.⁵²

It was the Angel who said: “Oh, Ibn Jurjīs, Iblīs played with your mind. The one you came for is the Messenger of Allah, about whom ‘Īsā’ warned”. And the angel hit Ibn Jurjīs with his hand, and the head of the patrician “fell between the shoulders”.⁵³ In this case, the threat of the transformation of the Muslim sacred space into a Christian one is important. It is possibly an allusion to the re-sacralization of al-Aqṣā and the Dome of the Rock by the Crusaders, as well as the conversion of other mosques on the territories of the Crusader states into churches.

Conclusions

Although the threat to the sacred spaces in the epics often comes not from the Franks, but from the Byzantines, and the action itself takes place in pre-Islamic times, the whole complex of narratives about the threats to sacred spaces in these works can be considered a repercussion of the Crusades, since the Arabic folk epics mentioned above developed precisely during this period and as a response to these events. The inclusion of plots about the struggle for the key sacred spaces of Islam in the tribal narrative and the stories about the struggle against the infidels on the Byzantine-Abbasid frontier, which were the basis of folk epics, indicate the great importance of the idea of protecting Jerusalem and Mecca in the Medieval Arabic folk culture. At the same time, it is important to note that in the epics there are no episodes of battles for Jerusalem and Mecca because the Christians are always defeated before they can reach them.⁵⁴

⁵¹ The origin of this epithet is unknown.

⁵² *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 290. Wa qāla urīdu aj ‘al ka ‘bat al-‘aqrab bī ‘a li-l-rūm ragħman ‘an anaf ḥakīmīnā al-madhmūm thumma nāma wa huwa sakrān min al-khamr fa-ra ‘ā fī manāmihi anna al-samā ‘ qad futiḥa lahā bāb wa-nazala lahu shakḥ.

⁵³ *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, vol. 1, 290.

⁵⁴ Though in some episodes of *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* Jerusalem is described as being held by the Franks.

It is crucial to observe that in the epics we find plots where the positively depicted Zoroastrians and Jews oppose the negatively described Christians, thus the former, in a sense, replace the Muslims in the defense of the sacred spaces of the Middle East from the invading *Ifranj* and *Rūm*, the ongoing war with whom is eternal in the epics. Moreover, Christians, especially the Franks, are dehumanized in the epics and pagan traits and rites are attributed to them, by introducing episodes like human sacrifices in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

It is also important to note that the Frankish and Byzantine characters have dreams in which Jesus or angels say that they must conquer Muslim sacred spaces, but then it turns out that it was actually Iblīs (Satan) or genies who spoke. Another remarkable point is that when it is said that a Christian ruler “wants to make a pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Jerusalem”, he always has a large army with him, and often declares that he wants to capture this sacred space.

The epics also portray the focus of the Christians on Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. In addition, we can assume that these works helped to create the image of the Frankish threat to Mecca in the popular imagination. It is important to note that before the Crusades, there were practically no precedents for the capture of Muslim sacred space by Christians, and that during the Crusades, Jerusalem with its shrines was captured, and there was also a significant threat to Mecca and Medina. Furthermore, despite the fact that Jerusalem is portrayed as a more important goal for Christians and, historically, it was indeed the object of the most active struggle between religious communities, Mecca is also given huge attention in the epic literature, because it is very important for Muslims themselves. In this case, it is also essential to note that since the Arabic epics emerged mainly in the Levant, the struggle for Jerusalem was of particular importance for the local folk storytellers there. Thus the Crusades, thanks to the popularity of folk epics in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, kept alive in the collective memory of the Arabs of Egypt and the Levant the idea of a European threat to Muslim sacred space.

Based on this, it can be assumed that some of the infamous incidents concerning Middle Eastern sacred spaces during the First World War reproduce the memory of the Frankish threat to the Muslim sacred space beginning with the time of the Crusades. This includes the episodes with two European military commanders: the English general Edmund Allenby (1861–1936) and the French general Henri Gouraud (1867–1946).

When the British troops entered Jerusalem in December 1917, General Allenby, in the presence of the noble Arab families of the city, is purported to

have uttered the phrase: “Only now have the Crusades ended”.⁵⁵ Likewise, during the entry of French troops into Damascus, General Gouraud, while near the grave of Salah al-Din, spoke his famous words: “Awake, Saladin, we are back. My presence here heralds the victory of the cross over the crescent” (*fr.* Réveille-toi, Saladin, nous sommes de retour. Ma présence ici consacre la victoire de la croix sur le croissant).⁵⁶

It should be noted that although the facts of such speeches delivered by the above-mentioned European commanders are in doubt, these events have nonetheless acquired great symbolic significance and are firmly rooted in the modern Arab cultural memory.⁵⁷ The descriptions of these cases are united by one important detail: they carry the ontological idea of violating the sacred space, whether it be trampling the graves of famous Muslim military leaders or claiming the right to the territory of the holy city of Jerusalem. Such episodes can, presumably, be considered examples of the reproduction of the memory of the desecration of the Muslim sacred spaces in the Holy Land by the Crusaders. Therefore, the preservation of the memory of the Crusades in the folk epics may be the reason why these episodes have become so crowd-pleasing. The very pattern of the incidents ascribed to Allenby and Gouraud was on “the horizon of expectations” of the Arab population of the Levant, since these two generals seemed to have carried out actions that coincide with

⁵⁵ Mark Urban questions the reality of such a statement by Allenby, noting that remembering the Pan-Islamic propaganda of the Ottomans, who declared jihād against the Allies in 1914, Allenby himself did not recommend his subordinates to use the “image of the Crusaders” and forbade his officers to use the terms “Crusade” and “Crusaders” in press statements. At the same time, the general emphasized that he was fighting only against the Ottoman Empire, and not against Islam. See, Mark Urban, *Generals: Ten British Commanders who Shaped the World*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2006), 233.

⁵⁶ Karl Meyer, Shareen Brysac, *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008), 359.

⁵⁷ It is important to note the archetypal nature of such a plot, since a similar episode at the same time took place in the history of the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922). The future Prime Minister of Greece Sofoklis Venizelos (1894-1964) after the occupation of Bursa by the Greek troops in August 1920 kicked the grave of the founder of the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Osman Ghazi (1258-1324) with the words: “Get up, Osman! Get up and save your country!”. Venizelos also took a picture at the grave. See, Dimitris Keridis, *Historical Dictionary of Modern Greece* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 165.

the intentions of the *Ifranj* and the *Rūm* against the sacred spaces as depicted in the Arabic folk epics.

MEDIEVAL MUSLIMS AND CRUSADERS IN
MODERN ARAB CINEMA: REASSESSING
YOUSSEF CHAHINE'S EPIC
AL-NĀṢIR ṢALĀḤ AL-DĪN
(*SALADIN THE VICTORIOUS*)

FADI RAGHEB*

Abstract

In the modern Arab World, the medieval images of Saladin and the Crusaders were frequently deployed by state leaders to convey modern political messages. This is best illustrated in Youssef Chahine's 1963 cinematic epic, Saladin the Victorious. It has been frequently argued that Chahine's film portrays Saladin's reign and his rivalry with King Richard the Lionhearted as an homage to the Arab Nationalist movement and its Egyptian leader, Nasser. Similarly, it has also been argued that the director Chahine, an Egyptian Christian, highlighted the equality between Christians and Muslims in his production, one of the major tenets in Nasser's supra-sectarian, Arab Nationalist project. This paper will alternatively argue that Chahine's film goes beyond these obvious, exoteric, balanced parallels. It will reveal that Chahine esoterically embeds a deeper image of Christianity throughout the film, one achieved

* M.A., Ph.D., University of Toronto. I would like to thank Ahmed M. Sheir and Amar S. Baadj for their invitation to contribute to this volume and for their comments and suggestions regarding my chapter. I also would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for their helpful recommendations. Finally, I would like to dedicate this chapter to the memory of the great Egyptian actor Hamdy Gheith and his magisterial, enthralling, and fascinating performance as King Richard the Lionhearted in the film *Saladin the Victorious*, a masterpiece of a role that magnetically captured my curious spirit from a young age and, unmistakably, motivated me to write this chapter as an homage to his brilliant re-enactment of the King of England and his trials and tribulations during the Third Crusade.

through its many Christian figures, themes, symbols, language, and hymns, which are relatively lacking when it comes to Islam in the epic. Here, Christians and Christianity take center stage, especially through the multi-dimensional Crusader characters of King Richard and the Hospitaller knight Louisa, along with their pilgrimage-odysseys to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. In fact, the film, this chapter will demonstrate, transforms into nothing less than a modern Christian epic—a didactic message on Christianity from the Arab Christian director Chahine to his Arab Muslim audiences across the Middle East.

“Historical epics are not simply used by Chahine to illustrate historical events, but as a lens on the present. In this sense, his epics emerge more as national allegories. Al-Nasir Salah al-Din (1963) is perhaps the most important epic film in Arab cinema”
Joseph Massad (1999).¹

Introduction

The Crusades constituted a significant epoch in the history of medieval Europe and the Islamic Near East. Fought over a span of two hundred years, the wars of the Crusaders in Palestine, Syria, and Egypt brought political, military, and cultural encounters between the central Islamic lands and European Christendom. The period witnessed Frankish armies descending onto the eastern Mediterranean, with the primary objective of capturing Jerusalem, the Christian faith’s holiest city, from the Muslims. The era also witnessed the reign of one famous Muslim ruler—Saladin. Al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Abū ‘l-Muẓaffar Yūsuf ibn Ayyūb (1138–1193), or “Saladin,” as he is known in Europe,² ruled over Egypt, Sudan, Syria, Palestine, the Hijaz, and parts of North Africa.³ As the founder of the Ayyūbid

¹ Joseph Massad, “Art and Politics in the Cinema of Youssef Chahine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 2 (Winter, 1999): 77-93, 81.

² “Saladin” is a Latinized rendering of “Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn,” his *laqab*, or honorific. Hereinafter, the chapter will use the Latinized name “Saladin” to refer to the Muslim sultan.

³ On Saladin and his reign, there are a plethora of monographs and articles. For earlier studies, see, for example, H. A. R. Gibb, *The Life of Saladin*, reprinted ed. (London:

dynasty (1169-1252), Sultan Saladin's reign saw some of the most renowned Muslim achievements during the Age of the Crusades: his victory against the Franks at the Battle of Hattin in 1187; the capture of Jerusalem/Bayt al-Maqdis;⁴ his diplomatic and military confrontations with King Richard the Lionhearted; and his successful rebuff of the Third Crusade. Saladin's entanglements with Richard even proliferated many a European legend, and their duel remains one of the most renowned examples of Muslim-European encounters during the medieval centuries, thus generating a lasting legacy in the West.⁵

Saqi Books, 2006); Andrew S. Ehrenkreutz, *Saladin* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1972); and M. C. Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of Holy War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). A summary of the earlier scholarly debate on the interpretation of Saladin and his career is found in P. M. Holt, "Saladin and His Admirers," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 46, no. 2 (1983): 235-39. More recent studies on the sultan include A. R. Azzam, *Saladin* (Harlow, U.K.: Pearson Longman, 2009); Anne-Marie Eddé, *Saladin*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); and, most recently, Jonathan Phillips, *The Life and Legend of the Sultan Saladin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019).

⁴ "Bayt al-Maqdis," which means "the House of the Sacred," is the medieval Arabo-Islamic name for the city of Jerusalem. For the Islamic names of Jerusalem during the medieval Islamic centuries, see Guy Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems. A Description of Syria and the Holy Land From A.D. 650 to 1500* (London: Alexander P. Watt for the Committee of the Palestine Exploration Fund, 1890), 83-84.

⁵ For example, Saladin's person makes an appearance in Dante's *Inferno*. He is also one of the protagonists in Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman*, which formed part of the plot in Youssef Chahine's film. Saladin's fame in the West today is also evident in, for example, the 1935 film *The Crusades* and the more recent Hollywood production *Kingdom of Heaven*. For studies on the memory of Saladin in the West during the late medieval, early modern, and modern periods, see Margaret Jubb, *The Legend of Saladin in Western Literature and Historiography* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2000); Eddé, *Saladin*, 463-91; and Phillips, *Life and Legend of Sultan Saladin*, 309-28. For a survey of Muslim-Frankish encounters during the Age of the Crusades, see Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999), 171-92. For the memory of the Crusades in European history, see the studies in Nicholas Paul and Suzanne Yeager, eds., *Remembering the Crusades: Myth, Image, and Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012); Marcus Graham Bull and D. Kempf, eds., *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014); and Mike Horswell and Jonathan Phillips, eds., *Perceptions of the Crusades from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century*:

The memory of the reign and accomplishments of the medieval Muslim sultan also experienced a strong literary and historiographical revival in the modern Arab Middle East.⁶ For example, the figure of Saladin, along with his wars against the Crusaders, has been frequently used by Arabs in the Middle East today to draw parallels between the present conditions of Arab states and the grander achievements of past medieval rulers, such as Saladin. More significantly, Arab leaders in the past century used the figure of the Ayyūbid sultan to communicate their political, ideological, and military messages to their citizens and the broader region. For instance, after the first Gulf War in 1991, the past Iraqi president Saddam Hussein frequently employed the image of Saladin battling the European Crusaders as a symbol of his own rule,

Engaging the Crusades, Volume One (Oxford: Routledge, 2018). For the study of the Crusades through the lens of remembering, see M. Cassidy-Welch and A. Lester, "Memory and Interpretation: New Approaches to the Study of the Crusades," *Journal of Medieval History* 40.3 (2014): 225-36.

⁶ For reasons for the ebbs and flows of the memory of Saladin and the Crusades in pre-modern and modern Arabo-Islamic historiography, see Fadi Ragheb, "New Sources on the Memory of Saladin in Islamic History: An Explorative Essay into the Arabic Chronicles of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period," in Amir Harrak, ed., *The Political and Cultural History of the Kurds* (New York: Peter Lang, 2022), 218-21. On the memory of the Crusades in modern Arabic historiography, see Emmanuel Sivan, "Modern Arab Historiography of the Crusades," in *Interpretations of Islam: Past and Present*, ed. Emmanuel Sivan (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1985), 3-43; Hillenbrand, *Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, 4-5, 589-614; Jonathan Riley-Smith, "Islam and the Crusades in History and Imagination, 8 November 1898–11 September 2001," *Crusades* 2 (2003), 151-67; John M. Chamberlain, "Imagining Defeat: An Arabic Historiography of the Crusades," M.A. diss., Naval Postgraduate Academy, 2007; M. Determann, "The Crusades in Arab School Textbooks," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19 (2008), 199-214; Haim Gerber, *Remembering and Imagining Palestine: Identity and Nationalism from the Crusades to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), especially 14-79; S. Heidemann, "Memory and Ideology: Images of Saladin in Syria and Iraq," in *Visual Culture in the Modern Middle East: Rhetoric of the Image*, ed. C. Gruber and S. Haugbolle (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), 57-81; Phillips, *Life and Legend of Sultan Saladin*, 345-86; and recent research by Oleg Solokov, including Oleg A. Sokolov, "The Memory of the Crusades in the Arabic Folk Epics: Images and Patterns," *Oriens* 6 (2022): 172-81; and Oleg Sokolov, "The Crusades in the Arab Social and Political Discourse of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Crusades* 22, no. 1 (2022): 100-14. For a review of scholarship on Arabic historiography of the Crusades, see the chapter by Ahmed Mohamed Sheir in this volume.

thus comparing himself and his struggles against the U.S., Israel, and his enemies in the region to the medieval dynast and his wars against the Franks. The employ of Saladin's person at the service of political messaging in the Arab world was present even earlier, as was the case with the rhetoric during the 1970s and 1980s of Yasser Arafat of Palestine and Hafez al-Assad of Syria.⁷

Yet the strategic use of the medieval image of Saladin for modern political, military, and ideological purposes was best deployed in the service of the Egyptian president Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir (referred to hereinafter as "Nasser"), especially in the magisterial cinematic epic *al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn* (*Saladin the Victorious*).⁸ Directed by the Egyptian Yūsuf Shāhīn (Youssef Chahine)⁹ during the golden age of Nasser's pan-Arabism, the 1963 visual masterpiece *Saladin the Victorious* portrays the reign of the twelfth-century Muslim sultan as an *homage* to the modern Arab Nationalist movement and its leader Nasser.¹⁰

⁷ Hillenbrand, *The Crusades: Islamic Perspectives*, 595; Heidemann, "Memory and Ideology"; Phillips, *Life and Legend of Sultan Saladin*, 368-86; Omar Sayfo, "From Kurdish Sultan to Pan-Arab Champion and Muslim Hero: The Evolution of the Saladin Myth in Popular Arab Culture," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 50, no. 1 (2017): 65-85; and Niall Christie, *Muslims and Crusaders: Christianity's Wars in the Middle East, 1095-1382, from the Islamic Sources* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 112-19.

⁸ Although the proper transliteration of the title of the film is "*al-Nāṣir Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*," there are many different transliterations in modern scholarship, such as "*El Naser Salah Ad-Din*," "*El Naser Salah el Dine*," and "*Al-Nasir Salah al-Din*." However, some scholars opted for simply "*Saladin*." I will use "*Saladin*" or "*Saladin the Victorious*" to refer to the film throughout the study.

⁹ On Youssef Chahine, see Massad, "Art and Politics"; Ibrahim Fawal, *Youssef Chahine* (London: BFI Publishing, 2001); Malek Khouri, *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2010); and Tamara Maatouk, "On the Heels of 1967: Chahine, Cinema, and Emotional Response(s) to the Defeat," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 55 (2023): 25-42. The commonly used transliteration of the director's name in Middle East Studies is "Youssef Chahine." I will be employing this transliteration when referring to the director in this chapter.

¹⁰ On the film *Saladin the Victorious*, see Hala Halim, "The Signs of *Saladin*: A Modern Cinematic Rendition of Medieval Heroism," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 12 (1992): 78-94; John M. Ganim, "Reversing the Crusades: Hegemony, Orientalism, and Film Language in Youssef Chahine's *Saladin*," in *Race, Class, and Gender in "Medieval" Cinema*, ed. Lynn T. Ramey and Tison Pugh (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 45-58; Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 42-52; Adam Sayfo, "From Kurdish Sultan to Pan-Arab Champion," 74-77; and for the most recent and detailed

Throughout the film, Chahine juxtaposes the person and politics of Nasser with that of Saladin, where Chahine portrays the struggle between Saladin and the Crusaders as a medieval epic that parallels the mid-twentieth century confrontation between Nasser's "progressive" Arab Nationalist camp and the Western "imperialistic" bloc.¹¹

The timing of the film, the year 1963, is crucial here, as it was exactly two years after the failure and the dissolution of the Egyptian-Syrian United Arab Republic. Hala Halim has stated that the importance of the film lies in its contemporaneous political message at the time:

The crucial timing of [the film] *Saladin* is clearly understood if one contemplates the year of its production. 1963: a year during Nasser's regime; a year that comes after 1948 and 1956 with their harrasing and dangerous events; a year, moreover, that follows the unity between Egypt and Syria (1958) and its dissolution (1961). 1963 is, therefore, a year when it is timely — if not imperative — to launch a propagandist film making the statements *Saladin* makes about a powerful Arab political leader who, by uniting the forces of the Arabs (and Saladin unites Egypt and Syria specifically), manages to achieve a difficult victory over the dangerous colonizing forces of the West in Palestine.¹²

analysis of the film, see Paul Sturtevant, "Saladin: Nasser's Political Crusade in *El-Naser Salah Ad-Din*," in *Hollywood in the Holy Land: Essays on Film Depictions of the Crusades and Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. Nickolas Haydock and E. L. Ridsen (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2009), 123-46. For the image and memory of Nasser in literature and film more generally, see Omar Khalifah, *Nasser in the Egyptian Imaginary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017); Sayfo, "From Kurdish Sultan to Pan-Arab Champion." On Arab Nationalism, including Nasserism, see Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, new ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). On the deployment of film and popular media in the service of Nasser and the Arab Nationalist movement, see Joel Gordon, *Revolutionary Melodrama: Popular Film and Civic Identity in Nasser's Egypt* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2002). For (Arab Nationalist) historical dramas in Egypt before, during, and after Nasser's reign, see Joel Gordon, "Film, Fame, and Public Memory: Egyptian Biopics from *Mustafa Kamil* to *Nasser 56*," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31 (1999): 61-79.

¹¹ For Chahine's use of film as an allegory on contemporary affairs, see Massad, "Art and Politics."

¹² Halim, "Signs of Saladin," 78.

The film, then, was a needed timely reminder to Arab audiences of the importance of Nasser and his principles of pan-Arabism. As Malek Khouri notes in his study *The Arab National Project in Youssef Chahine's Cinema*:

The creation of the United Arab Republic itself was informed by a political moment in which the notion of unity itself was high on the agenda of political discourse; the eventual failure of that union exacerbated internal tensions—even among those who agreed on the general parameters of the pan-Arab project. Thus Chahine's film on the twelfth-century Muslim leader Saladin clearly informed and was informed by this critical moment in contemporary Arab history, with all its preoccupations, hopes, and anxieties over the prospect of national unity.¹³

Indeed, Chahine's epic was an opportunity to highlight Nasser's Pan-Arab Nationalist principles, especially the tenets of supra-religious Arab unity and equality between Arab citizens, both Muslim and Christian.¹⁴

The film *Saladin* thus clearly employs balanced parallels between Islam and Christianity. Chahine presents each religion's figures, their attachment to Jerusalem, and their "justified" pursuit of holy war to capture the city, while using each faith's symbolisms, traditions, and language throughout the narrative. In Chahine's storyline, both Saladin and Richard are depicted as ideal rulers in search of a noble cause, but who similarly suffer treachery at the hands of figures within their respective camps. The Egyptian director also fills his film with an equally diverse set of Muslim and Crusader characters, including some who are noble and loyal, and others who are cunning and treacherous. On the surface, therefore, Chahine's masterpiece provides a balanced view of medieval Arabs and Crusaders and equality between Islam and Christianity.

Yet at a closer examination, Chahine's epic, this study will argue, goes beyond these obvious balanced parallels between Islam and Christianity. Chahine's production, it will become apparent, conveys to its predominantly Muslim Arab audiences a particularly *favourable* image of Christianity

¹³ Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 44.

¹⁴ On the history, politics, and ideology of Arab nationalism, including Nasser's manifestation of it, see Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism*, 135-251. For a biography of Nasser, see Joel Gordon, *Nasser: Hero of the Arab Nation*, reprinted ed. (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2012).

throughout the film, one achieved through the plethora of representations of Christian beliefs, narratives, rituals, symbols, language, and even songs and hymns. This is a reflection, I propose, of a personal, *didactic* message to Arab Muslim audiences by Chahine, a Christian Egyptian and an avid adherent to Nasserist Arab Nationalism, especially to the idea of equality of Muslim and Christian Arabs under the secular rule of a pan-Arab state.

To achieve his political—and personal—objectives, Chahine posits, this study will demonstrate, a more complex and multi-dimensional image of Christian characters, along with deeper and more detailed Christian beliefs, symbols, and language throughout the film, a depth that, I contend, is lacking when it comes to Muslim figures and traditions in the script. The film does not simply provide a balanced view between Christianity and Islam, but, rather, throughout the epic Christians and Christianity take center stage, especially through the characters of King Richard the Lionhearted and the Hospitaller knight Louisa de Lusignan. In fact, the film, it will be revealed, transforms into nothing short of a *Christian* epic: on the one hand, King Richard is depicted as *the central*, but fallen, Christian hero who, unlike Jesus of Nazareth, succumbs to the temptations of the devil, while on the other hand, Louisa, the spiritually-reborn and newly-devout Christian, succeeds in overcoming her temptations and the brewing forces of sin within her to become in the process an ideal Christian hero and even a Christian martyr.

Through this stunningly sophisticated portrayal of his faith on the screen, Chahine is able to construct and achieve greater depths—and intimacy—in his unprecedented setting of Christians and Christianity in modern Egyptian cinema. As a result, Chahine alters this seemingly-balanced, equal image of Muslims and Christians in his film, thus resulting in what I describe as Chahine's own personal and didactic message regarding his Christian background. After all, the director was clear about the film's element of "instruction" towards his Arab audiences.¹⁵

Therefore, this study is a new interpretation of the film that, instead of seeing it mainly through the exoteric Saladin-as-Nasser lens, it will unfold the film's esoteric message. Here, the Christian characters, symbols, language, and motifs are, in fact, the central themes of the film—what the film is really all about. By uncovering the esoterical in his creation, we come to understand how Chahine forms a narrative all about Christian elements in order to impart to his Muslim Arab audiences a detailed portrait of his Christian faith—and its centrality. This chapter will thus reassess Chahine's film by first extracting

¹⁵ See Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 45-46.

the Nasserist tenets embedded within it, especially Muslim-Christian equality, before proceeding to decipher in greater depth how this seemingly precise balance between the two camps is pierced by Chahine. The study will unveil Chahine's disruption of this poised equilibrium by delineating his extensive portrayal of Christian heroes, symbols, traditions, and language that ultimately come to predominate in the film's plot, characters, and images.



Figure 1. The DVD cover for the film *Saladin the Victorious*.

The Plot: Saladin, Battle of Hattin, Richard the Lionhearted, and the Third Crusade

The film *Saladin*¹⁶ narrates the career of the medieval Muslim sultan, played by Aḥmad Maẓhar, beginning with his capture of Jerusalem from King Guy of Jerusalem and Prince Renaud de Chatillon following the Battle of Hattin to his defence of Jerusalem against Richard the Lionhearted, played by Ḥamdī Ghayth, and the Third Crusade. After his victory at the Battle of Hattin and his conquest of Jerusalem, Saladin kills Renaud de Chatillon when the latter challenges the sultan to a duel. This defeat, and the loss of Jerusalem, angers the Crusader princess Virginia, played by Laylā Fawzī, who is also Renaud's wife. Virginia is a cunning and power-hungry figure who is also renowned

¹⁶ Almost all versions of the film have English subtitles, which contributes to the film's wider appeal to both Arab and non-Arab audiences.

for her looks, thus given the epithet “the beauty of all beauties.” She decides to head to Europe to convince the Christian kings there to launch a crusade and take back Jerusalem from Saladin. Before leaving the east, Virginia strikes an agreement with the treacherous Muslim governor (*wālī*) of Acre, played by Tawfīq al-Dhiqn, whereby he would receive the governorship of Acre and Jaffa in exchange for opening the gates of Acre to the Crusaders once the invading European legions arrive at the city’s walls.



Figure 2. Aḥmad Maẓhar as Saladin. ©The Criterion Channel

In Europe, Virginia exhorts the English King Richard the Lionhearted to launch a holy war to liberate Jerusalem from the Arab Muslims. She misleads the idealistic king by claiming that Christians suffer persecution at the hands of Arabs in the Holy Land; Christian pilgrims are enslaved and sold by the enemy; and the Sepulchre of Christ is defiled by Muslim rule. Enraged by the pitiful conditions of Christians in the East, Richard embarks upon a holy war—the Third Crusade—with a European army that includes the French King Philip (played by ‘Umar al-Ḥarīrī), the English Duke Arthur (Aḥmad Lūksur), and Conrad de Montferrat (Maḥmūd al-Milījī).



Figure 3: Ḥamdī Ghayth as Richard the Lionhearted.
©The Criterion Channel

The armies of the Third Crusade sail by sea towards Acre. At the gates of Acre, they face initial Arab resistance to their siege. Yet the Crusaders break the enemy's resistance and enter the city through the help of the treacherous governor of Acre, who fulfills his promise made earlier to Virginia. Once Acre is captured, the Crusaders move next to Ascalon, which they easily conquer due to their use of impregnable and fire-resistant siege towers.

Once Saladin realizes the advantage that the Crusaders possess with their siege towers, he tactically outmaneuvers the Crusader armies by leading them to battle outside the cities and in a swamp-filled battlefield, where their towers are rendered useless. Here, Saladin strikes a heavy blow against Richard and the rest of the European armies and defeats their camp with a comprehensive victory. This astute military stratagem did not pass unnoticed by Richard, who realizes that the sultan and the Arabs are not as weak and "barbaric" militarily as he has been told. Surveying the large number of Crusaders killed, Richard demands a truce to reorganize his troops and give his armies a rest.

As a result of Richard's pursuit of a truce with Saladin, conspiracies begin to unfold in the Crusader camp against the English king, where first King Philip—along with Virginia—conspires to end the truce struck between Saladin and Richard. However, his ploy is discovered and, as a result, Richard expels Philip back to France. Next, Virginia colludes with Conrad de Montferrat in a plot to bring down Richard through offering their assistance to Saladin against Richard and his English armies during battle. Specifically, Conrad offers Saladin a chance to defeat Richard by agreeing to withdraw his French troops in the middle of battle, which would expose Richard and weaken his forces. Saladin, however, refuses this offer, and maintains the truce. Yet even Conrad's conspiracy is discovered, this time by Duke Arthur, Richard's seemingly loyal, right-hand man, and the Frenchman is also forced out of the Crusader camp.

Enraged by all the machinations in his camp and fatigued by all the warring he has experienced, Richard decides to accept Saladin's offer to visit Jerusalem as a Christian pilgrim. However, out of greed for power, and in alliance with Virginia, Duke Arthur arranges for an Arab arrow man to assassinate Richard at the gates of Jerusalem, in a ploy to show that it was Saladin himself who cunningly invited Richard to Jerusalem only to kill him at the entrance of the Holy City. Although Richard is struck in the chest, he survives the attempt on his life. Saladin is angered by this unexpected twist and decides that he himself should go to Richard's camp and treat him. Although Saladin succeeds in healing his enemy, nevertheless Richard insists on going to war against the Muslim sultan for one final battle over Jerusalem.

Earlier during the truce between Saladin and Richard, a Muslim chemist, Al-Dimashqī, develops a flammable liquid that can set the Crusader siege towers on fire. He is smuggled out from Crusader territory by the Christian Arab commander ʿĪsā al-ʿAwwām, played by Ṣalāḥ Dhū ʿl-Faqqār, and therefore the chemist joins Saladin’s camp to mass produce his potion for the Muslim armies. As a result, during the final battle at the gates of Jerusalem, the Arab Muslims are able to burn the Frankish towers and eliminate them from the battle equation. What ensues is a comprehensive defeat of the Crusaders by the Arab armies. Saladin’s victory compels Richard to sue for peace and leave the Holy Land.

However, in the process of rescuing the chemist, ʿĪsā al-ʿAwwām is stabbed by a Crusader soldier, and he ends up at a Hospitaller hospital, where he reconnects with his love, Louisa, played by Nādyā Luṭfī. Louisa at the time had left her post as a soldier and leader of the Hospitaller battalion and decided to become a devout nurse to the injured in battle. In fact, a subplot that develops throughout the film is this love affair between the Christian Arab ʿĪsā and the Crusader Louisa, which begins during their first encounter at the Battle of Hattin. ʿĪsā, which means Jesus in Arabic, is one of Saladin’s closest friends and a trusted commander who is famed for his ability at swimming, hence his epithet “al-ʿAwwām,” or “the Diver.” The two fall in love, but despite sharing the same Christian faith, it is their national affiliations and the war between the two camps that keep them apart.

When ʿĪsā is brought to Louisa’s hospital, she is shocked to find him there among the injured. He asks her to leave with him, but she refuses, and instead she helps him escape from the Crusader camp. However, Louisa is caught in the act by Virginia, and she is put on trial for aiding an Arab escape, in a trial scene that is simultaneously set along the trial of the treacherous governor of Acre, who is captured by the Muslims and put on trial for treason by Saladin. The love affair between Louisa and ʿĪsā ends with their marriage at the end of the film.

Naturally, the film mixes between historical reality and outright fiction. It is true that Saladin pitched battle against the Franks at Hattin and defeated them, thus capturing Jerusalem. He also resisted the Third Crusade and prevented Richard the Lionhearted from recapturing the Holy City. Yet beyond that, most of the events and figures are, understandably, made up. ʿĪsā al-ʿAwwām does exist in the Arabo-Islamic chronicles but he was a

Muslim, and not a Christian.¹⁷ Similarly, while women did fight in the Crusades, we are unaware of a specific Louisa among the Hospitallers.¹⁸ Moreover, Saladin was not necessarily known as a physician, nor did he ever meet Richard face-à-face and heal the English king. In fact, this portrait of Saladin and his meeting with Richard is influenced by Sir Walter Scott's *The Talisman*, where Saladin is imagined as a noble king with great qualities, including those of a physician.¹⁹

Yet the fictional narrative of the film should not detract too much from its magisterial production. True, much of the plot and the themes of the film serve Chahine's Nasserist propaganda, as the next section will demonstrate. Nevertheless, the film should be judged more on *how* these themes were portrayed to the audience—in its brilliant filming and production, along with its intended meanings. The next two sections will provide just that: an attempt to decipher the obvious, or the exoteric, and the more veiled, or the esoteric, in Chahine's messages, and the manner in which these aspects were conveyed to the audiences of his time.

Chahine's Nasserist Themes: Anti-Imperialism, Supra-Sectarian Pan-Arabism, and Muslim-Christian Parallels

Chahine's film is unabashedly Nasserist in its message. As Paul Sturtevant explains in his insightful analysis of the film:

Three main facets of Nasser's political ideology are entwined with the Crusade narrative throughout the film: ideologies of anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, pan-Arab nationalist unity. Each has distinct ramifications in the context of how these ideologies employ and impact on the crusade narrative. One of the ways in which the film allegorizes its political climate is by constructing the Crusaders as congruous with the imperialist, capitalist European nations against which Nasser defined his regime.²⁰

¹⁷ See Bahā' al-Dīn ibn Shaddād, *al-Nawādir al-sultāniyya wa-l-mahāsīn al-Yūsufiyya: Sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī*, edited by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1994), 206-07.

¹⁸ See Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 136.

¹⁹ See Ganim, "Reversing the Crusades," 46; Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 124-25.

²⁰ Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 130.

Sturtevant's study demonstrates, albeit briefly, this interpretation by showing how the film portrays the major precepts of Nasserist pan-Arabism: Arab unity, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, and secular Arab nationalist identity.²¹ His interpretation is one that has been commonly identified in most studies of the film.²² This section will further advance the discussion on the theme by providing a hitherto unexplored angles of analysis of Nasserist principles in the film's events, figures, and dialogue, especially highlighting the exoteric messages of Muslim-Christian equality and poised parallels between the two faiths and their adherents, respectively.

Right at the beginning of the film,²³ the tenets of Nasserist Arab Nationalism are projected onto the scene where one of Saladin's generals, Ḥusām al-Dīn, is pleading with the sultan to help liberate Jerusalem from the Crusaders. Ḥusām al-Dīn refers to the people of Jerusalem as the "Arabs" of Jerusalem, and not the "Muslims" of the city. This is a clear allusion to the affairs of the Middle East at the time of the film and the struggle of the Arab progressive camp, under the leadership of Nasser, against Israel and Western imperialism. Ḥusām al-Dīn even goes further by stating that the Arabs of Jerusalem are "refugees" in their own land, which is a clear and obvious reference to the Palestinian refugee problem.²⁴ The next scene further emphasizes the "Arabness" of the people of Jerusalem, when an old and famished refugee sheikh perceives the echos in the swamp water as the drums of Saladin's armies, and he declares that "God has sent to us the rescuer of Arabism!"²⁵

Similarly, after the opening credits, the generals of Saladin affirm their sultan's status as the leader of the "Arabs." After disembarking off their horses and approaching Saladin, the officers address him as the "Sultan of the

²¹ Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 130-33.

²² See Halim, "Signs of *Saladin*," 78-79, and *passim*; Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 42-52; Khalifah, *Nasser in the Egyptian Imaginary*, 170-72.

²³ All pinpoint references to the film below are indicated in the following time coordinates: "hour:minute:second." These time stamps refer to the time when the scene or dialogue under discussion *begins*. In this study, time stamps will refer to the film edition available on the streaming platform The Criterion Channel, which also includes English subtitles. See *Saladin the Victorious*, directed by Youssef Chahine (Lotus Films, 1963), <https://www.criterionchannel.com/videos/saladin-the-victorious>. I thank Jonathan Phillips for directing my attention to the film's availability on Western film-streaming platforms.

²⁴ 00:06:20.

²⁵ 00:01:45. Note that all translations of dialogue are mine.

Arabs,” instead of “Sultan of the Muslims,” which would be his title during the medieval period.²⁶ This is yet another unapologetic assertion that the film’s hero is not only a medieval figure, but a modern one as well. And the dialogue does not fail to press this point even further to the audiences when Ḥusām al-Dīn states, “The Arabs await you with all the patience they can muster,” to which Saladin answers back immediately, “And we will not be late to answer the call of the Arabs.”²⁷

The theme of Nasserist pan-Arabism is further evident when Saladin, with a voice full of sympathy, equanimity, calmness, and fortitude of conviction, explains to his commander the following:

The dearest of my wishes O Ḥusām al-Dīn is that the flag of unity flutters high above the entire Arab nation. With this unity, this unity only, are we able to liberate Arab Jerusalem from the hands of the rapist Franks.²⁸

This stance of “Arab unity equals Arab victory” is repeatedly proclaimed. For instance, with the Arab armies heading to the Battle of Hattin, the medieval leader declares, “O how beautiful it is when the hearts of Arabs become united.”²⁹ Yet from this exhortation for Arab unity, the audience is introduced to the breaker of such unity, and the symbol of its very opposite—the treacherous Arab governor of Acre.³⁰

The governor of Acre is particularly swarthy, with trimmed facial hair and a depicted wickedness that is too obvious to any observer. It is very much a strong possibility that the governor of Acre here, who is depicted in the next scene machinating with Virginia, the Crusader “Beauty of all Beauties,”³¹ represents the conservative Arab camp at the time of Nasser—that of Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, and Jordan, those nations who, at the time, had a strong alliance with the capitalist Western bloc. This camp was also an obstacle to any unifying plans that Nasser had had for Arab states during the period, since they do not adhere to his socialist, pan-Arab policies, considering that they are, with the exception of Jordan, wealthy, oil-

²⁶ 00:09:38.

²⁷ 00:10:12.

²⁸ 00:10:19.

²⁹ 00:11:55.

³⁰ 00:12:01.

³¹ 00:13:44.

producing Arab nations. The governor of Acre thus represents the major wedge between Saladin and the unity of all Arabs, which is highlighted in the next scene when the *wālī* of Acre, full of lust and desire for the seductive Virginia, agrees to help her in any plans she may have against the Arab camp.³²



Figure 4. Virginia striking a deal with the governor of Acre.

©The Criterion Channel

After Renaud de Chatillon attacks a Muslim (Arab) pilgrimage caravan heading to the Hajj, Saladin gathers his army and heads to the base of the hills of Hattin, where the Crusaders, led by King Guy of Jerusalem and Renaud de Chatillon, are encamped. After a while, the Crusader camp is forced to begin battle since Saladin and his armies were able to attack the Crusader camp secretly and quietly at sunrise and destroy their water storage tanks, a tactic that led to the Franks' extreme thirst and dehydration. Renaud fool-heartedly decides to attack Saladin, even against the advice of King Guy. Here, immediately before battle—i.e., the Battle of Hattin—Saladin delivers a spectacularly-filmed speech, arousing his troops' vigor and mustering their strength to attack and defeat the Franks. In his speech, Saladin proclaims the tenets of Nasserist pan-Arabism by addressing his troops as "Arabs" again: "O Arabs, this is the battle of honour..."³³

³² 00:14:20.

³³ 00:37:38.



Figure 5. Battle of Hattin. ©The Criterion Channel

After Saladin's victory at the Battle of Hattin, the film has the Arab Muslim armies praying together. At the same time, we see Louisa, the Hospitaller knight, and ʿĪsā al-ʿAwwām, one of Saladin's trusted commanders and an Arab Christian, both kneeling together in Christian prayer behind the prostrating Arab troops.³⁴ Here, Chahine portrays a parallel between Islam and Christianity, reflecting one of Nasserism's themes of equality of faiths and the supra-sectarian message of Arab nationalism and unity. This is one of the most crucial scenes in terms of exoterically expressing to the audience said theme. Louisa is stunned that ʿĪsā, who is an Arab, is also a Christian, praying along with her. She desperately inquires, "You are a Christian, and you fight with them!" to which ʿĪsā responds, "With *them*? They are my brothers and my kin!" She then asks, "And what about your brothers in the Cross?" ʿĪsā goes on to explain to Louisa another tenet of Nasserist pan-Arabism—its anti-imperialist stance: he informs her that he is not convinced by the intent and motivation of foreigners who use the Cross as a cover for invading his country.

This significant exchange ends with Louisa asking him about his name, to which he answers her with "ʿĪsā," which means "Jesus" in Arabic. At that moment, Louisa is stunned, but her shock is drowned by the Arab troops' exclamation, "God is Great! God is Great!" thus displaying another moment of the parallel and equality between Christianity and Islam: uttering the name Jesus is immediately followed by the Islamic expression "God is Great!"—one of the most important expressions of the faith.³⁵

³⁴ 00:45:13.

³⁵ 00:46:53.

After the victory at the Battle of Hattin, and the departure of the remaining Frankish knights, including Virginia, the film sets the scene for Saladin's victorious entry into a grand mosque in Jerusalem, the very same place where we earlier saw King Guy praying before an image of Mary and the child Jesus.³⁶ What is intriguing here is that as Saladin is walking through the place, he is feted and glorified by his troops with exclamations that are quite uncanny and particular, ones that reflect the equality of Islam and Christianity. On the one hand, a soldier shouts out, "Bayt al-Maqdis has returned to the Arabs," using the Islamic name of Jerusalem. On the other hand, we hear another proclamation stating, "Long live the rescuer of Ūr Shalīm," using the Arabic Christian name for the city.³⁷ These alternating proclamations using both Muslim *and* Christian names of the city are evidence yet again of the exoteric equality and parallelism between Islam and Christianity, one of the major goals of Nasserist pan-Arabism.

Yet this theme does not stop there. When Saladin orders one of his soldiers to read his decree to the captured Frankish knights and soldiers, once again this tenet reappears unmistakably at the scene:

To the Christians in Bayt al-Maqdis they have all the rights that Muslims in the city possess...To the Christians of all corners of the world, they have the right of pilgrimage to Bayt al-Maqdis...³⁸

Once again, the equality of Islam and Christianity here is expressed clearly and unambiguously: Christians and Muslims both have the same rights to the city, including pilgrimage rights. This scene ends with a duel between Saladin and Renaud, which ends, as it does historically, with Saladin killing Renaud: a message of the triumph of good over evil, of the pious, noble king over the greedy, cunning knight.

³⁶ 00:49:56. Perhaps this is the Dome of the Rock, since it was recorded that the Franks converted the Dome of the Rock into a shrine with Christian images inside it, and a cross posted atop the outer dome. However, it is not clear whether this is the Dome of the Rock or another edifice, perhaps Al-Aqṣā Mosque, which lies in the Noble Sanctuary, just south of the Dome of the Rock.

³⁷ 00:49:46. On the different names for Jerusalem, including ancient Hebrew, Christian, and Arabic names, see Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, 83-84; and George Adam Smith, *Jerusalem: the Topography, Economics and History from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70*, vol. 1 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1907-1908), 250-71.

³⁸ 00:50:19.

Nasserist themes are further projected during the scene that concludes the first part of the film, when all the released Frankish prisoners of war march out of Jerusalem and head back to Europe after their defeat at Hattin (the expeditions of the Third Crusade constitute the second part of the film).³⁹ Once again, we have Louisa and ʿĪsā jostling over the rights and wrongs of the war and, by extension, their relationship. Louisa refuses to marry ʿĪsā and be “just another slave” for an Arab. She decides to leave Jerusalem and return with her fellow countrymen back to Europe. Marching with other departing Franks, Louisa is in a state of shock, almost a disembodied ghost, disappointed by her side’s defeat, her forced decision to leave the Holy City, and by her inner tormented soul that vacillates between leaving with her people and staying in Jerusalem to marry her Arab lover.⁴⁰ It is an internal conflict pitting her emotional heart, which is her love to ʿĪsā, against the rational forces of her mind that pull her towards union with her fellow countrymen and Frankish Christian brothers and sisters. In this scene, Louisa declares her desire to leave, since, according to her, Jerusalem must be in the hands of the Crusaders to protect Christians there. ʿĪsā refuses her assertion, and exclaims that Ūr Shalīm is Arabic and in Arab land.⁴¹

On the one hand, this exchange asserts that Christians have a right to Jerusalem, but, on the other hand, Jerusalem is Arab land and belongs to Arabs and, by extension, to Muslims as well. Thus the equality and parallel between Christianity and Islam is once again presented to the audiences, furthering the supra-religious, secular agenda of Nasserism. Moreover, ʿĪsā angrily protests to her that she wants to join those who turn faith into commerce, an allusion to the Western imperialist bloc’s exploitation of religion to control the Holy Land and to advance their financial and power-hungry interests, a clear reference to Nasserism’s anti-capitalist stance. ʿĪsā angrily emotes that he hates those who “convert religion into commerce, who transform the Sacred Sanctuary to a market...pay to acquire a blessing and after that the monies flow back (*tataḍaffaḡu*) to Europe.”⁴²

This anti-capitalist element is present throughout the film.⁴³ You have Virginia filmed on several occasions clutching onto the jewels and pearls of

³⁹ 00:56:24.

⁴⁰ 00:57:55.

⁴¹ 00:58:06.

⁴² 00:58:20.

⁴³ This motif is also discussed by other interpreters of the film: see Sturtevant, “SaladiNasser,” 130-32.

the “Orient,” those riches that, she hypnotically divulges, can be garnered only if she and her Crusader co-conspirators control the Holy Land.⁴⁴ Indeed, upon her return to Europe, Virginia delivers a long, impassioned, but albeit deceptive speech to King Richard about the conditions of Christians in the east, thus lying about their persecution, enslavement, and suffering at the hands of the Arabs, not to mention, she adds, the defilement of the Sepulchre of Christ.⁴⁵ Her speech is an apparent reflection of the Nasserist view on modern “capitalist” motivations behind the West’s expansion to and dominance over the Middle East, to which Nasser was vehemently opposed. After her speech to Richard, we witness Virginia convincing the French King Philip to go on a crusade to recapture the Holy Land by enticing him with a trove full of jewels, seductively informing him that all these riches will be his if he ventures to the Holy Land and defeats Saladin.⁴⁶

The launch of the Third Crusade under the leadership of Richard and the expedition’s capture of Acre from the Muslims constitute the beginning of the second part of the film.⁴⁷ The siege of Acre is a scene filled with Nasserist themes. First, there is the betrayal of the city by the treacherous governor of Acre, who orders his soldiers to open the gates of the city to the besieging forces of the Third Crusade. Once again, the governor of Acre represents the conservative Arab bloc and their alliance and cordial relations with the U.S. and other Western countries, along with their opposition to socialist pan-Arabist ideology.

⁴⁴ See, for example, 00:59:18 and 1:10:13. See also Sturtevant, “SaladiNasser,” 139, where Sturtevant notes that the Crusaders are filmed clinging to “the Eastern jewels.”

⁴⁵ 00:54:11.

⁴⁶ 00:59:18.

⁴⁷ 1:00:17.



Figure 6. Richard the Lionhearted leading the Third Crusade.

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Furthermore, amidst the siege, one of Saladin's commanders gives an arousing speech to those in Acre who are beginning to fear the Crusading forces, especially that the European armies are led by the strong and powerful Richard. He states right at the beginning of the speech, and in very clear terms, that you *Arabs* are being forced to face Europe's finest, and that you must fight them with all that you possess—another nod to the modern period: this battle is not between medieval Muslims and Crusaders, but between modern-day *Arabs* and Western imperialists.⁴⁸

After the capture of Acre, the Frankish forces are in celebratory mood, all in a drunken state watching acrobats, fireworkers, and even belly dancers entertain the troops.⁴⁹ Sturtevant has indicated that this scene is Orientalism in reverse, where Chahine is positing a pre-supposed stereotype of the Westerner who loves his alcohol and loose in morals as he watches belly dancers swaying their seductive bodies in temptation.⁵⁰ Be that as it may, this is only a too-obvious a tactic deployed by the sometimes not-too-subtle Chahine to indicate clearly to the Arab audiences that the Crusaders are drunken with power, ignoble, and even reckless. Yet what is crucial in this scene is how the image of Richard emerges among the multitude of revelers in their unearned victory.

⁴⁸ 1:05:49.

⁴⁹ 1:08:39.

⁵⁰ See Sturtevant's assessment of the film's Occidental angle in its negative depictions of the Crusaders: Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 139.

Richard refuses to discuss the spoils of war and who will rule over Acre, angrily reminding his fellow kings and knights that “There is no talk at all concerning the distribution of the spoils of war, O protectors of the Cross! We are still in a Holy War!”⁵¹ What is further telling is how this scene, where Richard reminds his fellow Crusaders that they are conducting a *holy war*, is immediately followed by the figure of Saladin in his tent reading the Qur’an after the Arab defeat at Acre. Here, the Crusading *holy war* that Richard mentions is immediately paralleled with *Muslim* holy war, since we see that Saladin is facing a copy of the Qur’an and reading in silence the famous Qur’anic verse concerning the fate of Muslims who die fighting a *holy war*, such as those who fell defending Acre: “do not think of those who have been killed in God’s way as dead. They are alive with their Lord, well provided for.”⁵² Saladin’s brother then enters his chambers, and consoles him with yet another Qur’anic verse: “We deal out such days among people in turn.”⁵³ Therefore, Chahine presents an immediate parallel between a Christian holy war, uttered by Richard, and an Islamic *jihad* alluded to by the Qur’anic verse Saladin is reading, thus further providing the recurrent theme of Muslim-Christian parallels and equality, even in the concept of holy war.

The ubiquity of this Nasserist theme is matched with the preponderant references to two other tenets—that of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism.⁵⁴ There is no better scene to convey and fulfill this message to the Arab audiences than when Saladin decides to visit the Crusader camp to negotiate a peace deal with the enemy after his initial defeats at the hands of Richard and the armies of the Third Crusade.⁵⁵ Saladin believes that Richard is a noble and true knight of the Cross whose interest is only to protect Christians in the Holy Land, and not to seek financial gains. The Arab sultan arrives at the Crusader camp with only a couple of his commanders, and with the absence of a ceremonial retinue. Indeed, the Muslim leader appears before the

⁵¹ 1:14:49.

⁵² 1:15:10; Qur’anic verse 3:169 (translation from *The Qur’an: A New Translation*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 47.

⁵³ Qur’anic verse 3:140. The full verse is even more telling about Saladin’s defeat and Richard’s victory. The full verse reads as follows: “If you have suffered a blow, they too have suffered one like it. We deal out such days among people in turn, for God to find out who truly believes, for Him to choose martyrs from among you—God does not love evildoers.” See *The Qur’an*, trans. Abdel Haleem, 44.

⁵⁴ See also Sturtevant’s analysis on Saladin and his troops’ socialist, anti-capitalist stance: Sturtevant, “SaladiNasser,” 131-32.

⁵⁵ 1:18:56.

Crusaders in the most humble of entourages a royal can muster. He is riding without an army, flags or banners; there are also no foot soldiers accompanying him, or swordsmen—only Saladin and his closest of commanders appear at the enemy's camp. This is the image of pro-socialist Nasserism, one of humility, asceticism, and understatement.⁵⁶ Yet what faces Saladin is the capitalist, opulent kings on the Crusader side, with all their armies' pomp and circumstance. Chahine conveys a very stark contrast between the two camps during this meeting in order to assert the admirable Nasserist tenets of socialism in the face of the arrogant and greedy Western imperialistic bloc.

During this scene, one of the major epithets of Nasserism is presented to the audience. After all the kings and princes of Europe announce themselves to him using their most imperial of titles and honorifics, Saladin introduces himself as merely "Saladin, worshipper of God, servant of the *Arabs*."⁵⁷ Of course, all throughout the film Saladin is Nasser and Nasser is Saladin, and here it is no different. But what emerges is a testy exchange between Saladin and the leaders of Europe on who should rule Jerusalem, where once again another parallel between Islam and Christianity emerges—between a humble, believing Muslim sultan and a humble, believing Christian king. During the scene, Richard suddenly emerges from afar, advancing towards the Crusader camp but humbly dressed, with no crown or sword, and not even riding on a horse, very much paralleling the form in which Saladin has chosen to appear.⁵⁸

Once again, the two royals mirror each other, revealing yet another expression of the equality between the *noble* Muslim and the *noble* Christian, the parallel between the believing and just rulers of both the abode of Islam and the realm of Christendom. Richard berates Saladin with accusations that no Christian can accept the persecution of Christians in the Holy Land and the defilement of the tomb of the "Son of God." In response, Saladin angrily rejects such accusations, informing Richard that he, Saladin, a man who believes in all the prophets, would never defile the grave of the Messiah, Jesus,

⁵⁶ As Sturtevant explains when describing a different scene, "Saladin is portrayed as a socialist warrior-revolutionary fighting against the opulence and greed of the wealthy imperialists. His simple military camp and the functional, often monochromatic dress he and his men wear are juxtaposed against the opulence and extravagance of the Crusaders": Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 131.

⁵⁷ 1:20:57.

⁵⁸ 1:22:42.

who is also, Saladin emphasizes, a prophet in Islam. He further asserts that Jerusalem is Arab land (rather than *Muslim* land) and it is open for visitation to people of *all* faiths.⁵⁹

The Muslim sultan then proceeds to ask ʿĪsā to speak on his behalf, as a Christian Arab and one of his closest friends.⁶⁰ At this moment, the climax of Nasserist principles is uttered by the *Christian* ʿĪsā: “Our motto is ‘Religion belongs to God and the Nation is for all.’”⁶¹ Yet the Crusaders remain unconvinced, revealing once again their “capitalist” ethos when Conrad dismisses ʿĪsā as just another paid mercenary—a projection, I would argue, of Conrad and the Crusader camp’s own intentions in this war: to enrich themselves with the monies and resources of the Holy Land. Saladin then objects, stating that only Conrad knows those who are bought by money. Once again, Nasserist anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist banners raise their heads here. The scene ends with Saladin offering his hand in peace, only to be rejected by Richard and the Crusaders with the proclamation “War! War! War!” loudly booming out from the entire European camp.⁶² After appealing to Richard’s Christian conscience to stop this war, Saladin departs after warning the enemy that they and their decisions will only “burn the branches of [the Mount of] Olives...”⁶³

The teachings of equality and parallels between Islam and Christianity re-surface after the battle at Ascalon. Realizing that it is impossible to defeat the Crusaders with their impregnable and fire-proof siege towers, Saladin devises a tactic to deceive them into battle outside fortified cities and in open fields. The Arab Muslim armies thus entrap the Frankish camp, attacking them in open fields.⁶⁴ During the battle, many enslaved Arabs pulling the Crusader towers shout “Go Arabs! Go Arabs!”⁶⁵ (In fact, throughout the film, Saladin’s camp is referred to as “the Arabs,” instead of “the Muslims.”) Yet after his side’s victory, Saladin remains in his tent, pensive, tired, fatigued, and in no mood to celebrate.⁶⁶ One reason here is that his son Ismāʿīl is missing, and may have been killed in battle.

⁵⁹ 1:23:04.

⁶⁰ 1:24:00.

⁶¹ 1:24:08: “shiʿārunā al-dīn li-llāh wa-l-waṭānu liʿl-jamīʿ.”

⁶² 1:24:25.

⁶³ 1:24:56.

⁶⁴ 1:29:36.

⁶⁵ 1:35:50.

⁶⁶ 1:37:50.

Importantly, Saladin's mood after his victory is paralleled by Richard's state of mind. The English king is also seen in his tent with his wife in a complete state of shock, displeased and saddened by the defeat. It is at this moment that he realizes that Saladin is a shrewd tactician of war, and not a so-called "barbarian."⁶⁷ The English king then walks through the fields of battle to inspect the fallen troops in a deeply moving—and eerie—scene, which includes a vulture hovering over the dead bodies, edging forward on a tree branch and looking down onto Ismā'īl, thus foreshadowing the imminent death of the sultan's son.⁶⁸ Again, Richard's mood is pensive, very much that of Saladin's. The English king then demands of his war council that a truce be struck between the Crusader camp and the Arabs, a decision vehemently opposed by the Frenchmen King Philip and Conrad de Montferrat.⁶⁹

The parallel here is that neither Saladin nor Richard is a true winner or loser after battle. Instead, the war is affecting both equally: the dead are everywhere, both Muslim and Christian, Arab and European. Holy war is costly. Even kings lose their sons, which is the case with Saladin when the audience finds out that his son is dead. Incidentally, the Christian 'Īsā mourns the loss of Ismā'īl the most. He cannot fathom his death, and enters a state of hysteria, screaming in delirium that Ismā'īl is still alive.⁷⁰ It is significant here that it is the *Christian* 'Īsā who mourns the dead Muslim Ismā'īl: in an analysis of their names, 'Īsā (Jesus in Arabic) is mourning the death of Ismā'īl (Ishmael, the biblical father of the Arabs and the ancestor of Muslims in the Islamic tradition). This scene is once again a reaffirmation of the unity of Arab Muslims and Arab Christians, one of the central tenets of Nasserist Arab Nationalism.

This parallel between Islam and Christianity is also seen when Richard discovers Conrad's attempt to conspire with Saladin against the English king.⁷¹ When Richard reads Conrad's treacherous letter to Saladin and realizes the depth of deception being concocted by men of the Cross, Richard is shocked, enraged, and full of despair. He invokes the biblical tale of Judas's betrayal of Jesus as a parallel to Conrad's treacherous plot against him.

⁶⁷ 1:39:43.

⁶⁸ 1:40:30.

⁶⁹ 1:40:21.

⁷⁰ 1:38:21.

⁷¹ 2:07:38.

Similarly, Saladin is offered a deal by Duke Arthur to defeat Richard, but Saladin refuses it as well.⁷² Just like Richard's reference to the Christian tradition, Saladin also cites his own Islamic traditions when he rejects Arthur's offer, including citing Prophet Muḥammad's example on the proper conduct of war. Saladin declines his brother's argument that he should accept the deal since the Prophet himself used to win over opposing factions through similar stratagems. Saladin, paralleling Richard's angry reflection on the biblical story of Jesus's betrayal, also references the Islamic tradition by angrily reminding his brother that the Prophet was in the midst of war when he was deploying such tactics, when it was necessary to do so to win battle. However, the Muslim camp, Saladin reminds his brother, is in a truce with the Crusader enemy and hence should respect the agreement and not conspire to sow discord between Richard and his Crusader allies. Thus appears another parallel between the Muslim and Christian rulers, where the traditions of *both* faiths are cited, discussed, and reflected upon, further engendering in the film Nasserist tenets of equality between the two religions.

This is very much on display in the same scene, when both Richard and Saladin reflect on the nature of holy war. Richard furiously and rhetorically asks his wife:

Is this the Holy War for which thousands of our sons have been martyred? Nay a punishment in the world could exorcise the crime of these treacherous kings! ... Is this the war that the knights are conducting? Are these honourable battles, or poisoned traps? And what is the difference then between Saladin [if he agrees to Conrad's plot] and the ancient pagan emperor who paid some followers of the Messiah and so they sold him the body of Jesus?⁷³

In parallel, Saladin reminds his brother why they fight, the nature of war they are conducting, the value of honourable triumphs, and the disgrace of tainted victories:

We should not celebrate a victory gifted to us by a Christian king at the expense of the corpses of his brothers...What is the value of this victory that is defiled by dishonour. We do not fight to attain a land, but we fight to further the spiritual and moral

⁷² 2:15:55.

⁷³ 2:07:50.

principles...And you, as a man of politics, how are you assured that a man such as this prince [referring to the treacherous Conrad who is offering Saladin the chance to defeat Richard], who betrays his people and the cause he is fighting for, and lies to his allies, how are you assured that this man would respect his word or his agreement with you?⁷⁴

The scene ends with Saladin ordering his brother to write back to Conrad explaining that the Arabs will teach him and the Franks that an honest defeat is nobler than victory imbued with betrayal and dishonour.

One of the most telling scenes on the parallels and equalities between Islam and Christianity appears later at the haunting trial of Louisa and the governor of Acre.⁷⁵ The audience is presented with two courts side by side. On the right hand side is the Christian Crusader court with Louisa under trial, after she was caught helping an Arab soldier, *ʿĪsā*, escape the Crusader camp. On the left, we have the Muslim Arab court, with Saladin acting as prosecutor over the fate of the treacherous governor of Acre. This scene, which is discussed in more detail in the next section, is the epitome of the poised, balanced view of Muslims and Christians in the film. Above the Christian court, there are several crosses; similarly, atop the Muslim court we read the words “Allāh” and “Muḥammad” in Arabic, coupled with crescents—all symbols of Islam. The two camps are prosecuting treachery. On the Muslim side, it is the actions of the governor of Acre. On the Christian side, it is Louisa who is charged with aiding and abetting the escape of an Arab, here her lover *ʿĪsā*, from the Crusader hospital. The speech of Saladin to the governor of Acre is filled with references to Nasserist pan-Arabism. He reminds the governor of his actions, telling him, “You hated your *nation*⁷⁶ and your *Arabness*,⁷⁷ and you were too willing to surrender Acre!”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ 2:16:50.

⁷⁵ The scene begins at 2:23:33. For more on the significance of the trial, see *infra*.

⁷⁶ Here Saladin uses the anachronistic Arab Nationalist term “*waṭan*” for nation, a term he imports from the modern discourses and political realities of the twentieth-century Middle East.

⁷⁷ “*Urūbataka*.”

⁷⁸ 2:25:12.



Figure 7. The scene of parallel trials.
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Then, towards the end of the trial, Richard, in bringing forth the climax of the scene, angrily rejects Conrad's prosecution of Louisa and turns the trial against Conrad himself, charging him with betrayal, which is the same charge laid by Saladin against the governor of Acre in the Muslim court. The charge against Conrad is based on Richard's discovery of the Frenchman's treacherous offer to Saladin: his proposal to withdraw his French troops during battle so that Saladin can defeat the English king. The finale of the trial is concluded by Richard railing against Conrad and his actions by lacing his angry words with Christian references, exclaiming at the end, "For let the Lord's strike descend upon all who conspire against Ūr Shalīm!"⁷⁹ Similarly, Saladin ends his trial by using Islamic religious language to adjudicate on the punishment of treason.⁸⁰

Yet these poised parallels between Islam and Christianity are only too obvious an exoteric message of the film. This is a major part of the political message of Nasserism that Chahine is deploying in the film. However, there are many times during the film that this balanced and equal portrayal gives way to a much deeper elaboration on Christianity, Christian figures, and Christian traditions. As the next section will show, while Muslim Arabs are depicted favourably in the film, much of the figures of the Muslim Arab camp are one-dimensional, predictable, and homogenous in their portrayal. It is the Christian symbols, narratives, and personalities, the analysis will unveil, that

⁷⁹ 2:27:20.

⁸⁰ 2:27:30. The end of Saladin's speech is spoken in a tone that appears as if the sultan is citing a Qur'anic verse. However, I have not been able to locate his final sentences in the Qur'an. There are similarities between his phrasing and verse 7:56.

come to dominate the film. In particular, it is the Christian characters, especially Richard and Louisa, who reveal intriguing complexity and multi-dimensional depth. In fact, the Christian figures, it will be argued next, are the real heroes of the film, and, together with the elaboration of Christian themes, represent the deeper esoteric meaning of the film.

Christian Themes, Fallen Heroes, Ideal Martyrs, or, How Richard and the Crusaders Stole the Show

Much has been written about the images of Saladin and Richard in this film. Scholarship on Chahine's cinematic production has mainly asserted that both Saladin and Richard are ideal rulers, honourable, strong, and both intent, and rightly so, on their just cause of capturing Jerusalem.⁸¹ This is part of Chahine's parallel depiction of an equal Islam and Christianity, a balanced image of a Muslim Arab and a Christian Crusader. Yet the plot unravels to reveal much more than this too-obvious a parallel. Indeed, we witness, as the present analysis will unfold, how Richard emerges as *the* central figure. We become privy to his test-laden odyssey in the Holy Land, to how he loses his focus and becomes seduced by earthly power and fame that winning Jerusalem would bring to him when he sails back home with the keys to the Holy City. While it is true that Saladin and Richard are seemingly equal counterparts in the film, Richard's personality, I will argue, is much more nuanced and multi-dimensional, a portrayal, I affirm, that is part of how Chahine projects the themes of Christianity and Christian figures center-stage in his epic. It is also how, based on Chahine's didactic message on Christianity,⁸² Richard—and other Christian figures—stole the show, becoming triumphant cinematically with their fascinating characters.

In Chahine's portrayal, Richard is the tragical protagonist who, reminiscent of Shakespeare's Hamlet and his moral conundrums, is incensed, confused, and paralyzed as a result of the treachery in his camp, which reaches its unfortunate apogee in the assassination attempt on his life. As a result of the numerous treacherous acts of the Crusader leaders surrounding

⁸¹ On this prevalent thesis in studies on *Saladin the Victorious*, see my introductory remarks above. See also Halim, "Signs of Saladin," 85-87.

⁸² I here affirm the theory of director as "auteur," which is adhered to by Hala Halim but rejected by Sturtevant: Halim, "Signs of Saladin," 78; Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 143, n. 5.

him, Richard loses faith in his God and in his sacred pilgrimage-crusade⁸³ to capture Jerusalem and defend the city's Christians. The film, it can even be argued further, is *less* about Saladin—at least in the second part of the film with the beginning of the Third Crusade—and more about the story of Richard's *odyssey*, in how a Christian, believing knight succumbs to the devil's temptation—Richard as the fallen hero.

Richard's odyssey reaches its crossroads in a scene reminiscent thematically and cinematographically of Sir Laurence Olivier's setting of "To be or not to be" soliloquy in his 1948 Shakespearean masterpiece *Hamlet*.⁸⁴ Here, Richard stands over a cliff set above waves crashing against it, and succumbs to the voice of the devil whispering in his ear the glories that the conquest of Jerusalem would bring, along with the humiliations that the King of England would suffer in Europe if he returns home empty handed without the keys to Jerusalem.⁸⁵ This scene is unapologetically Christian in its image: Richard here is in the image of Jesus when Jesus was being tested by the devil in the wilderness atop the mountain overlooking the kingdoms of the world. In this biblical scene, the devil tester shows Jesus the great rewards of earthly power and its splendour, and seduces him by whispering to him that of "all these things will I [Satan] give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."⁸⁶ Jesus of course resists the devil's temptation and declines the earthly deal by declaring, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."⁸⁷

⁸³ On the Crusades as a form of pilgrimage, see discussion below.

⁸⁴ *Hamlet*, directed by Sir Laurence Olivier (Two Cities Films, 1948), <https://www.criterionchannel.com/videos/hamlet>.

⁸⁵ 2:31:51. In fact, immediately prior to this scene, Duke Arthur presents to Richard what glorious, earthly gains conquering Jerusalem would bring to the English royal. In a sense, Arthur here is offering Richard the Devil's Temptation. The duke repeats this offer in the next scene when Richard looks over the hills of Jerusalem while experiencing the Temptation of Christ.

⁸⁶ Matt. 4:9 KJV.

⁸⁷ Matt. 4:10 KJV.



Figure 8. Richard's "To Be or Not To Be" Hamlet-esque moment.

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Similarly, Richard in this scene attempts to push the lure of Satan, represented here by the voice of the treacherous Duke Arthur inside Richard's head. However, unlike Jesus, Richard falls short of holding steadily onto his beliefs. Instead, the English king loses his faith, succumbs to the devil's temptation, and begins to ponder "the banner of Richard over Jerusalem." Now fully within the devil's clasp, Richard exclaims, "Satan, tell Saladin I accept his offer [to visit Jerusalem as a pilgrim]," but he conditions his acceptance by elaborating, "this does not mean peace or the end of the battle," thus insisting that he will continue to war until he *himself* is enthroned king of Jerusalem.⁸⁸ The scene ends with Arthur, the testing devil, smiling contently after conquering the Christian spirit of Richard.



Figure 9. The Temptation of Richard, with Duke Arthur as the testing Devil.

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⁸⁸ 2:32:11.

Thus Richard has fallen to the Devil, who appears behind him in the scene as the seemingly loyal but treacherous Duke Arthur. An unChristian warrior Richard becomes, now hell-bent over capturing Jerusalem at any cost.⁸⁹ And yet Richard's fall from grace and loss of faith is further deepened by the assassination attempt on his life at the gates of Jerusalem, after he had agreed to Saladin's invitation to visit the Holy City as a pilgrim. The assassination attempt was orchestrated by none other than Duke Arthur.⁹⁰ Richard's brush with death further drowns him in the lust for earthly spoils that a seemingly holy war would bring him by the conquest of Christianity's most sacred city. Richard thus becomes the fallen Christian, the believer who loses his faith and desires instead the Faustian deal. This is most evident in the dialogue between him and Saladin, when the latter comes to heal the Englishman in his tent after the assassination attempt on his life.

Here is yet another stunningly filmed scene by Chahine. We observe Saladin and a couple of Muslim commanders, including ʿĪsā, ride in disguise through the Crusader camp, which at the time is enraged by the assassination attempt on Richard's life.⁹¹ The scene is fascinatingly tense: you see Saladin and his generals on horseback disguised as Crusader knights, marching slowly through the European camp, where we find thousands of Crusader soldiers seething in anger and hatred towards any Arab; it is a brewing volcano at the precipice of erupting into a sea of fired-up soldiers wanting to wage nothing short of a bloody and vengeful war against their enemy. Moreover, it is night time, and the camp is lit by thousands of burning torches, and, to further add to this nail-biting scene, there is Duke Arthur (who arranged for Richard's assassination attempt) and his co-conspirator Virginia giving moving speeches to arouse the Crusader troops' hatred of Arabs and edge them closer and closer to launch a holy war against Saladin and his armies.

Saladin finally ends his horse-back ride through the dangerous cauldron when he arrives at Richard's tent, where the English king lies there asleep. After silently treating the wounded royal, Saladin begins to have a fascinating

⁸⁹ On how some of the Crusaders in the film, including eventually Richard, are cynically motivated by economic gain and lust for power rather than the noble goal of securing the right of Christians to perform pilgrimage at the birthplace of Christianity, see Halim, "Signs of Saladin," 87-89.

⁹⁰ Richard's visit to Jerusalem begins with a priest blessing him and other Crusader figures before they embark onto their pilgrimage to the city. See 2:32:24.

⁹¹ 2:35:48.

exchange with his counterpart Richard on the purpose of the Crusades and who should rule Jerusalem.⁹² Here, Richard explicitly reveals his weakness to Saladin, pronouncing—so eloquently—his lust for earthly power as a confession of a sinner, a fallen Christian hero, of a believer who lost faith during his pilgrimage odyssey to the Holy Land. When asked by Saladin why should he rule over Jerusalem, Richard very pensively informs him of all the *earthly* glories capturing *earthly* Jerusalem would bring to him:

But you don't know, O sultan of Muslims, how the Pope in Rome, and all the woodcutters on the remote mountains and the peasants in their fields, the old around the fireplace during the winter nights; thousands and thousands of Christian folk await the return of Richard and in his hand the keys of Jerusalem.⁹³

In response, Saladin angrily warns Richard that he is no longer a *Christian* king but a fallen hero, an earthly ruler seeking the vain glories that titillate the puffed ego of a greedy warrior at the expense of all Christian values. Indeed, angered by his noble counterpart's ignoble goals, Saladin reminds Richard of his fall from grace and its dangerous consequences:

Richard! You are gambling over a deceptive dream! You are not fighting to seek the glory of the Cross but *your* glory. I warn you O king of the English, for you are seeking your own grandeur! You push forth the peasants and the woodcutters to death in order for you to become king over Jerusalem. You search for the booty of war, you push forth the thousands of simple folk to death in a foreign land in order to become king over Jerusalem, so that the bugles of war declare to you, "Richard the Lionhearted has recaptured Jerusalem!" You want war, so let your wish come true, but I warn you: for you will not win it. *Beware from yourself O noble knight.*⁹⁴

Yet one cannot falter Richard for such descent into the moral abyss, for being so close to death, and believing that the arrow that pierced his heart is a treacherous Arab arrow, Richard inevitably—and predictably—loses faith

⁹² 2:41:30.

⁹³ 2:43:39.

⁹⁴ 2:44:04 (emphasis added).

even further. And how couldn't he, after an assassination attempt seemingly concocted by the cunning Saladin after the sultan himself had invited him to a pilgrimage to Jerusalem.



Figure 10. Saladin healing Richard at the Crusader camp.
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This image of a struggling protagonist, vacillating between his spiritual faith and his earthly ambitions, is, in my opinion, a more fascinating narrative of a hero, this fallen Christian pilgrim-king, and it is in stark contrast to the *one-dimensional* image of the perfect Muslim sultan in the film. Saladin is continuously portrayed as the epitome of the ideal ruler, a great leader, and a noble and merciful king. He is also a great tactician, defeating the Crusaders on more than one occasion due to his military acumen. He never waivers in his holy mission to defend Jerusalem, which, to him, is Arab land and belongs to the Arabs.⁹⁵ When offered a conspiring deal to defeat Richard by, first, a treacherous Conrad and, later, by a backstabbing Arthur, Saladin, as the noble hero, firmly rejects all ignominious offers—and without hesitation.

Only in one occasion do we see a Saladin in a less-than-ideal image. After learning that his son was killed during a battle that the Arab camp had won against the Crusaders, Saladin trembles and kneels down in weakness of body and soul, unable to deal fully with the loss of his son. He reaches out to God and prays, “My Lord, give me the capacity to endure and to forbear.”⁹⁶ Overall, however, Saladin’s image in the film is one of an ideal, unwavering

⁹⁵ Sturtevant also indicates that Saladin never refers to himself as a holy warrior (*mujaḥhid*) or to his war as a holy war (*jihād*): Sturtevant, “SaladiNasser,” 134.

⁹⁶ 1:39:28.

pinnacle of nobility in both war and peace. A far cry it remains, though, from the deeper and more multifaceted figure of the Christian king Richard.

While on the exoteric surface, the parallels between Saladin and Richard, as two equal foes, reflect a parallel equality between Islam and Christianity, the multi-dimensional Richard versus a one-dimensional Saladin is part of Chahine's esoteric positing of Christianity at the center of the narrative. In fact, this contrast between a multi-dimensional Crusader figure and a one-dimensional Arab figure is also evident in another European-Arab relationship in the film—that of Louisa and 'Īsā. To be fair, there are several one-dimensional and uninteresting Christian characters in the film: Renaud de Chatillon as the power-hungry, ignoble, impetuous knight; King Guy of Jerusalem as the calm and wise older man; and the cunning figures of King Philip, Conrad, and Arthur. They are all, generally speaking, limited characters, lacking depth or development.⁹⁷

Still, Chahine's depiction of the enemy camp is not as one-dimensional and stereotypical as, for example, Sir Laurence Olivier's portrayal of the lazy and cowardly French court in *Henry V*, with the exception of Montjoy.⁹⁸ On the contrary, some characters here are complex.⁹⁹ Take Louisa, for instance. Her character as a Christian knight is much more intriguing, and is in stark contrast to that of the Arab 'Īsā, her lover. 'Īsā's character is typically one-dimensional, exactly like that of Saladin: 'Īsā is an Arab who is always noble, always steadfast, always loving, and always forgiving. Louisa's character, on the other hand, experiences development and growth, and conveys yet another heroic odyssey as a Christian figure who struggles with her faith and the earthly world's inescapable horrors and temptations. In fact, Louisa's character, and her love affair with 'Īsā, is much more than the typically-required romantic subplot inserted to entertain audiences, as it has been argued in scholarship on the film.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ See also Halim, "Signs of Saladin," 87, where she attempts to categorize the Crusader characters based on the motives undergirding their pursuit of war in the Holy Land.

⁹⁸ *Henry V*, directed by Sir Laurence Olivier (Two Cities Films, 1944), <https://www.criterionchannel.com/videos/henry-v>.

⁹⁹ I disagree here with Sturtevant's opinion that Chahine's portrayal of Crusader characters is too stereotypical and is imbued with Arabs' biased presuppositions of the Western personality: Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 139.

¹⁰⁰ See Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 137, where he states: "The relationship between Louisa and 'Issa fulfills two of the generic requirements for the Hollywood historical epic: the romance and the happy ending." See also Halim, "Signs of Saladin," 84-85.



Figure 11. Louisa and ʿĪsā.
©The Criterion Channel

Louisa is the Hospitaller knight who later, as part of her transformation into a devout Christian and firm believer, turns to the peaceful vocation of nursing as a refuge from warring and its sinful horrors, shocking stratagems, maddening intrigue, and ceaseless cunning. Giving up her arms was the result of Louisa's growing disillusion with war, along with, importantly, her budding feelings towards a member of the enemy camp—the Arab commander ʿĪsā. At the beginning of the movie, Louisa's Crusader character is one of a strong and beautiful female knight—a femme fatale even—who is also the leader of the Hospitaller troops at Hattin. Before battle, she encounters ʿĪsā for the first time while bathing unarmed and naked in what is assumed to be Lake Tiberius.¹⁰¹ After pleading with him to give her time to get dressed before arresting her, which he obliges, Louisa cunningly pierces his back with her shooting arrow, before warning him that the next time the arrow will strike his heart, a predictive innuendo in the film for how later his heart will be struck by her love. Yet during the Battle of Hattin, their roles reverse, where this time ʿĪsā was given the chance to kill the swordless Louisa and, instead of striking her a deadly blow, he allows her to escape, thus beginning his love for her.¹⁰² His mercy and restraint at that moment perhaps help convert Louisa from a fighting warrior full of hatred for the Arab camp to a more pietistic Christian who sees the imperfections of war and its corruptive power to a Christian soldier, such as herself.

¹⁰¹ 00:26:48.

¹⁰² 00:33:33.

At the end of Battle of Hattin, and with the comprehensive defeat of the Crusaders, Louisa, along with fellow Christian fighters, is captured by Saladin's army. As mentioned earlier, here we have one of the film's most famous scenes. The Muslim army begins to pray after the conclusion of battle, with Louisa also simultaneously performing her Christian prayers.¹⁰³ It is here that she is surprised to learn that her lover 'Īsā is a Christian Arab fighting among Muslims against his fellow Christians from Europe. What is significant in this scene is that Louisa is not only troubled by the fact that 'Īsā decided to fight on the side of his co-nationals against his Christian kin, but by also sensing her own growing feelings of love towards an Arab, even if he was Christian, a feeling that, in her developing religious conscience, represents a temptation and a sin that, surely, demands resistance from a Christian believer like herself.

In fact, Louisa's tension with her feelings towards an Arab parallels her disillusion with a seemingly holy war. In regards to her love for 'Īsā, she refuses to stay with him after the Crusaders have left Jerusalem at the end of Hattin, and tells him she is a Crusader knight who cannot marry an Arab, thus leaving him and Jerusalem to return to Europe. Yet when she arrives back to the Holy Land as part of the armies of the Third Crusade, Louisa decides to shun war and to turn instead to nursing the wounded. In a way, Louisa, it can be argued, morphs from a one-sided ideologue, who, as leader of the Hospitallers, is determined to wage war against Arabs, to a character whose experience fighting in the Holy Land helps her pierce through the blinding veil of an aimless war full of violence, deceit, and ignobility.

In other words, Louisa has exited the cave in Plato's *Republic*, thus overcoming the *shades* of the real, here the naïve belief in a holy war, and she begins to see the *true* forms of reality, here the sobering realness of war, with all its unChristian evils. Louisa's character thus experiences a quantum leap to the next stage of human (Christian?) development. Her new stage of humanness is represented by her new vocation as a nurse, dedicating her life to peacefully helping others in need.

Yet when she is surprised by 'Īsā's presence as a patient at her hospital tent, after he was rescued by some Crusaders who found him floating off the coast, Louisa begins to gravitate towards the sinful temptation of being with her Arab lover, thus for a brief moment lovingly embracing 'Īsā's bare chest while he is lying unconscious in one of her hospital beds.¹⁰⁴ However, Louisa resists

¹⁰³ 00:45:23.

¹⁰⁴ 2:10:36.

the temptation of being with her (Arab) lover, and immediately leaves his side, even as she struggles with her feelings towards him. She feels incapable of being with ʿĪsā due to the current war that has been driving a wedge between the union of their two souls. Significantly, Louisa here is also trying hard to maintain her faith, thus kneeling and trembling with fear and desperation before an image of a crucified Christ on a cross. She then begins to pray desperately to her God in order to resist the temptation of being with her lover who is also her enemy in this war, pleading to Him in tears:

O Lord, I have left warring and devoted myself exclusively to nursing in order not to face circumstances that are too burdensome for me to bear. O Lord, if it was written that once again I endure the torment of experience...¹⁰⁵



Figure 12. Louisa, as a nurse, encountering ʿĪsā at her Crusader hospital.
©The Criterion Channel

Yet Louisa successfully escapes the temptation and emerges unscathed by sin, with her faith intact. She even resists another temptation to be with her lover, when ʿĪsā attempts to convince her to leave the Crusader camp and be with him. Knowing that his life is in danger, Louisa refuses his offer and instead helps him escape. She even resists one final plea to join him and escape

¹⁰⁵ 2:11:13. Her prayers are interrupted by ʿĪsā's sick voice and his incomprehensible utterances as he wakes up from his sleep.

together, before ʿĪsā flees the enemy’s camp on a horse given to him by Louisa.¹⁰⁶

Even aiding ʿĪsā’s escape is an obvious *Christian* act of sacrifice, for in her act of setting him free, Louisa sacrifices herself, her feelings for ʿĪsā, her status, and even her life altogether, as she is caught in the act by Virginia and is sent to trial to face the possible punishment of “burning like the witches” —her own sacrificial crucifixion.¹⁰⁷ In other words, by setting her lover free, Louisa was possibly redeeming ʿĪsā and facing, as a result, her own crucifixion. Louisa, as such, becomes the Christian martyr. When she is queried by Virginia regarding her “treacherous” action of setting an Arab free, she rejected Virginia’s accusation, and even rebutted Virginia’s charge that she is the lover of an Arab. She holds steadfast to her faith, responding, “God doth knows, I am of no sin.”¹⁰⁸

I have previously detailed how Louisa’s ensuing trial by the Crusaders’ council of war¹⁰⁹ is one of the most stunning and unforgettable scenes in the film.¹¹⁰ Her trial, as has been described in the previous section, is another example of the *seemingly* juxtaposed parallel between Islam and Christianity, with two courts set side by side: one Crusader court set for her, and another Muslim court for the treacherous governor of Acre, with Saladin presiding over the latter. Yet once again, Chahine esoterically brings Christianity to the forefront of the scene, this time through the Christian teaching of *love*, which is the underpinning theme of prosecution in *both* trials—in the Christian *and* Muslim courts.

¹⁰⁶ 2:21:59.

¹⁰⁷ 2:22:50.

¹⁰⁸ 2:23:11.

¹⁰⁹ 2:23:25.

¹¹⁰ Sturtevant interprets the trial of Louisa as follows: “Louisa becomes a Joan of Arc figure, her virtue highlighted by the evil of those accusing her. Her tolerance and love is superior to their ‘sacred hate’”: Sturtevant, “SaladiNasser,” 137.



Figure 13. The trial of Louisa. ©The Criterion Channel

Side by side stands the Arab Muslim court and the Christian Crusader court. At the Arab Muslim corner is the trial of the governor of Acre; in the Christian corner the trial of Louisa. She is being prosecuted by Conrad de Montferrat, while Saladin himself is leading the tribulations against the governor of Acre. In a brilliant setting we see Richard who is not only present at the Christian court, but who is also able to simultaneously hear and see Saladin's prosecution of the governor of Acre at the parallel Muslim court. Atop the Muslim court is the Muslim symbol of the crescent. Above the Crusader court is its counterpart, the cross, this Christian symbol that, incidentally, fills the screen ubiquitously during much of the film, at times even with dominating grandeur.

Conrad accuses Louisa of possessing *love* which, according to him, blinds the sacred duty of hatred of the enemy in a holy war, while Saladin warns eloquently against the *relinquishment of love* by the governor of Acre. Love here, of course, is one of the main teachings of Christianity and a foundational tenet of the message of Jesus. Intriguingly, it is the *Muslim* leader Saladin who is espousing the *Christian* theme of love.¹¹¹ Of course, this is not to say that Islam does not teach love, for it does, and much of the teachings of Islam and Prophet Muhammad extol love, including a Muslim's love for God and his fellow man, and God's love for mankind. Yet what makes this scene particularly Christian in its theme is that Chahine could have had Saladin preach to the governor of Acre about the evils of disloyalty and the disheartening vice of betrayal, about the unreligious sin of treachery committed by the governor of Acre against his own Muslim community.

¹¹¹ 2:25:05.

Instead, Chahine chose “love” as the theme for *both* trials. Saladin, the hero, follows love, while Conrad, the soon to be revealed traitor, is advocating the *opposite* of love. Both parallel trials, then, are adjudicating over a *Christian* ethic. The scene comes to a climax when the Muslim sultan angrily crosses the illusionary barrier between the two courts and preaches to Conrad, in a pulsating and compelling dialogue, the merits of love and its necessity:

Conrad: She should be killed as a result of who she loves!

Saladin: No! For you [Conrad] don’t understand that with your killing of *love* you yourself and whoever is around you shall perish!

Conrad: No victory without hate!

Saladin: No liberation without *love*.

Conrad: Let our sacred hatred win back its rights.

Saladin: Let hatred be erased from the world!

Conrad: Burn her like the witches!¹¹²

Finally, while Islam and Christianity are poised equally in a side by side balanced depiction, during much of the film it is Christian language, symbols, narratives, and even Christian music that unmistakably dominate screen time—what I argue here as Chahine’s personal *homage* to his own Christian faith, and his use of the film as a tool of didacticism to his Muslim Arab audiences. For example, Christian terminology is deployed throughout the movie: for instance, Jerusalem is almost always referred to as “Ūr Shalīm,” the Arabic Christian name for the city. “Bayt al-Maqdis,” the Islamic name for the city, is rarely used, while the modern Arabic name for the city, “al-Quds,” is never even mentioned. Even Saladin himself, a *Muslim* leader, refers to Jerusalem in much of his dialogues with its *Christian* name—“Ūr Shalīm.”¹¹³

Additionally, the Muslim connections to Jerusalem are never mentioned: the Islamic exhaltation of Jerusalem by way of Prophet Muhammad’s visit to

¹¹² 2:26:08 (emphasis added).

¹¹³ On Jerusalem’s many names, see Le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, 83-84; and Smith, *Jerusalem*, vol. 1, 250-71.

the city during his miraculous Night Journey, *al-Isrā'*, is never stated in the film by the Arab Muslim protagonists. Nor is Jerusalem ever connected to Islam as the faith's first *qibla*, or direction of prayer for Muslims, to invoke or highlight the importance of Jerusalem to the Muslim armies in the film. Even missing throughout the film is the image of the Dome of the Rock—the Islamic epicenter in Jerusalem and the destination of every Muslim pilgrim and visitor during the medieval period.¹¹⁴ In fact, the Dome of the Rock, that glorious Islamic shrine and stunning example of medieval Islamic architecture that symbolizes the connection between Jerusalem and Islam, is never even alluded to by Saladin and his Muslim camp. The only justification for Saladin's defence of the city is that Jerusalem is "Arab" land, a *secular* justification to capture and defend the Holy City, and an obvious reference to Nasser's secular Arab Nationalist manifesto.¹¹⁵

While the connection of Saladin and the Muslim camp to Jerusalem is justified only under the secular tenet of the Holy Land's "Arabness," in contrast, the explanation of the Crusader connection to Jerusalem in the film is unapologetically Christian and religious in nature—and numerous, to the point of ubiquity even. It is affirmed repeatedly by Richard, Louisa, Virginia, and other Christian characters throughout the epic. The "Christianness," if I may, of Jerusalem is invoked on many occasions, as it is called in the film "the city of the living God (*madīnat al-Ilāh al-Ḥayy*)," "the city where the good tidings were brought by the Son of God"; the city where "the Sepulcher of Christ lies" ("*qabr al-Masīḥ* or *mahd al-Masīḥ*"); "the city of the Mount of Olives" ("*madīnat al-zaytūn*"). It is even spoken of in the most infamous of

¹¹⁴ Islamic pilgrimage to medieval Jerusalem has a long and rich history during the Middle Ages. See, for example, Amikam Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship: Holy Places, Ceremonies, Pilgrimage* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995). See also the studies by the present author in Fadi Ragheb, "City as Liminal Space: Islamic Pilgrimage and Muslim Holy Sites in Jerusalem During the Mamluk Period (1250-1517)," in *The Friday Mosque in the City: Liminality, Ritual, and Politics*, edited by A. Hilāl Uğurlu and Suzan Yalman (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2020), 75-122; Fadi Ragheb, "Sharing the Holy Land: Islamic Pilgrimage to Christian Holy Sites in Jerusalem During the Late Medieval and Early Modern Period," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 95 (Fall 2023): 69-99; and Fadi Ragheb, "History of Islamic Pilgrimage to Mamlūk Jerusalem During the Later Age of the Crusades (648-922 A.H./1250-1517 C.E.): A Study in the Corpus of the Faḍā'il al-Quds Texts from the Mamlūk Period," Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2024.

¹¹⁵ On the emphasis of the ethnicity of "Arabness" over the Muslim identity of Saladin and the Muslim connections to Jerusalem, see Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 133-35.

Biblical titles, "Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets" ("Ūr Shalīm, yā qātilat al-anbiyā'").¹¹⁶

Furthermore, Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem is a major justification for Richard's holy crusade.¹¹⁷ Invoking the importance of securing for Christian pilgrims access to Jerusalem and its Christian holy sites reveals Chahine's sophisticated, historical knowledge of this medieval war. As the historian Ernest Barker famously pronounced in his revered scholarly article on the Crusades in the early twentieth century, the Crusades are nothing but "pilgrimage under arms,"¹¹⁸ which is still a valid interpretation today of the mission and purpose of the Crusades. As Jonathan Riley-Smith explains when he discusses the launch of the First Crusade by Pope Urban II at Clermont in 1095:

The goal of Jerusalem made the crusade both a war and a pilgrimage. While on the one hand Urban used of it the language of pilgrimage – *iter, via, labor* – on the other he also employed the military term "Jerusalem expedition" (*Jherosolomitana expeditio*)... For one crusader it was not only the "Jerusalem pilgrimage", but also "such a...great...expedition of the Christian people contending to go to Jerusalem to fight for God against the pagans and the Muslims" ...¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Matt. 23:37 KJV.

¹¹⁷ On this point, see also Halim, "Signs of Saladin," 87-89, where she also highlights Chahine's skepticism regarding the motives of some of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, pointing out how Chahine highlights the Crusaders' "earthly" ambitions of conquest, profit, and economic gain.

¹¹⁸ "When the First Crusade finally came, what was it but a penitentiary pilgrimage under arms—with the one additional object of conquering the goal of pilgrimage? That the Pilgrims' Progress should thus have turned into a Holy War is a fact readily explicable, when we turn to consider the attempts made by the Church, during the 11th century, to purify, or at any rate to direct, the feudal instinct for private war (*Fehde*): Ernest Barker, "Crusades," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (London, 1911), online:
https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Crusades
(last accessed 12 May 2019).

¹¹⁹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 32.

Chahine fills his narrative with the theme of Christian pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the image of Christian pilgrims: pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem; pilgrims entering Jerusalem; pilgrims leaving Jerusalem; pilgrims praying at churches in Jerusalem. Christian pilgrimage here is conveyed as an extension of Crusading. Yet *Islamic* pilgrimage to Jerusalem is never filmed, and very infrequently mentioned. In fact, the Muslim caravan of pilgrims that was attacked by Renaud de Chatillon and thus sparked the Battle of Hattin was for pilgrims heading to the Hajj in Mecca. Although Islamic pilgrimage to Jerusalem was an important religio-social phenomenon in the history of the city during the medieval period,¹²⁰ Muslim pilgrims to Jerusalem are never depicted on screen. Instead, we are constantly reminded, both visually and in dialogue, of the importance of Christian pilgrimage to the city.

In fact, Christian symbols, including, among many others, crosses, crucifixion images, and icons of Mary and the Jesus child, are everywhere in word and image. Similarly, Christian language, traditions, and narratives are also prevalent throughout the film. For example, when Richard discovers Conrad's plot to betray him in battle, he exclaims in great anger and references the life of Jesus as follows, "The head of Christ is being sold by 30 pieces of silver (*ra's al-Masīh yubā'u bi-thalāthīn qiṭ'at-in min al-fiḍḍa*)." Richard further commiserates angrily in unequivocal Christian terms, bluntly pronouncing, "Judas Iscariot returns to the living once again (*Yahūdha yub'athu min jadīd*)," thus comparing his own betrayal by Conrad to Jesus's betrayal by Judas.¹²¹ We even witness Louisa quietly vocalizing the Lord's Prayer at the end of the final battle at the gates of Jerusalem, when she discovers that Virginia had suffered extreme face burns during battle.¹²²

Even Christmas Eve appears in the film in a cinematically stunning scene. Following the final battle, and with the victory of Saladin and the Muslim camp all but secured, Saladin decides to strike a final blow to the Crusader camp, only to realize, by seeing his commander 'Īsā standing silently and sadly in the corner with a cross hanging on his chest, that the very same night is actually Christmas Eve.¹²³ As a result, Saladin pauses pensively, and

¹²⁰ See, for example, Elad, *Medieval Jerusalem and Islamic Worship*; Ragheb, "City as Liminal Space"; Ragheb, "Sharing the Holy Land"; and Ragheb, "History of Islamic Pilgrimage to Mamlūk Jerusalem."

¹²¹ 2:07:38.

¹²² 2:53:00. Similarly, sin is referred to repeatedly in its Christian Arabic terminology, *khaṭī'a*, with no mention of the Islamic term for sin — *dhanb*.

¹²³ 2:57:06.

remorsefully tells his commanders, “Have you wished greetings to your brother ʿĪsā and your other Christian brothers for the birth of the Messiah?” to which everyone turns to ʿĪsā, including Saladin, with warm embraces.¹²⁴ As a result, Saladin refrains from fighting on such a momentous occasion, announcing that the Muslim camp will not fight today in honour of Christmas Eve. Immediately after, the Muslim call for prayer is heard rising aloud, and Saladin states his intention to pray. Simultaneously, the Christian hymn “Come All Ye Faithful” in Latin is faintly heard. However, the Christian chant slowly grows louder and louder and, in yet another puncture to the poised equilibrium between Islam and Christianity, it *fully* drowns the Islamic call for prayer, giving way to a spectacular Christian scene depicting Christmas outside Jerusalem, and even inside the Holy City’s churches.¹²⁵ At this moment, the Latin hymn dominates the screen vocally and all the defeated Crusaders encamped around the city look towards Jerusalem, now a mountain alit with sparkling pearls of light at early sunrise. Louisa and Richard’s wife kneel down singing, and Richard himself is emotionally moved, after which he pays a visit to Saladin and offers to surrender. Even Orthodox Christian priests make an appearance in this scene, singing and gazing towards the city.¹²⁶ Overall, the scene of Christmas Eve lasts for more than three minutes, which constitutes a significant portion of time. In fact, Chahine chooses Christmas Eve to conclude his epic.



Figure 14: The scene of Christmas Eve in Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. ©The Criterion Channel

¹²⁴ 2:57:33.

¹²⁵ The scene begins with the Islamic call for prayer at 2:58:05, after which it is drowned by the Christian hymn.

¹²⁶ 2:59:00.

Here, a major Christian celebration is presented to the audience but with *no* Muslim parallel, save for the short call for prayer, which is then drowned by the rising Christian voices singing a Christian hymn in Jerusalem on a *snowy* night, which is yet another allusion to the perfect Christian day: Christmas Eve with falling snow over the Holy City and the Mount of Olives (even though snow is infrequent in that part of the world). While there is an apparent parallel between the call for prayer and the Christian hymn, once again, however, Chahine, through the memorable depiction of Christmas Eve, brings Christianity front and center. The poised, balanced parallel between Islam and Christianity gives way one more time to a predominant Christian theme.

Nor is this hymn the only time we hear Christian devotional music. There are several instances when Christian chants are heard. For example, Christian chants are played when Christian soldiers and pilgrims are leaving Jerusalem after the Battle of Hattin. Christian hymns are also heard when King Guy of Jerusalem is seen praying before an image of Mary on the wall in a church in Jerusalem.

Moreover, this painting of Mary is only one of many Christian symbols and images placed throughout the film. In fact, crosses, both small and large, abound in Chahine's masterpiece, ubiquitously placed in almost every scene that involves the Crusader camp.¹²⁷ At the Battle of Hattin, there is a huge cross set atop the highest hill where the Franks are encamped. Crusader flags and banners are filled with crosses, while Muslim images or flags with Islamic epithets are rarely used. To be fair, there are images of the Qur'an and Saladin reciting verses from it, but these few scenes dwarf in comparison to the number of scenes in which crosses fill the screen.

Conclusion

With such preponderance of Christian images, symbols, and language, Chahine's film brings Christianity to the forefront of his epic. The audience learns so much about Christianity, and viewers become overwhelmed by the

¹²⁷ I disagree with Sturtevant's observation that most crosses are "corrupted," leaning 90 degrees at either side to give the image of a fighting sword, while other crosses, he adds, are even turned upside down. See Sturtevant, "SaladiNasser," 132. While there are instances where the crosses appear crooked or upside down, nevertheless the film is ubiquitously filled with a plethora of upright crosses that dominate the screen on so many occasions.

amount of Christian symbols splattered across the entirety of the film. Most importantly, though, it is the well-developed Christian characters of Richard and Louisa, with their heroic journeys wavering between steadfast faith and the temptations of sin, who leave, in my view, the strongest impact on the audience. In fact, it could be argued that if this film is renamed *The Third Crusade*, or *The Odyssey of Richard the Lionhearted*, or even *The Temptation of Richard*, it would take, I think, a simple task of editing out several scenes that openly glorify and praise Saladin on the screen, and the film would become one about the Christian camp in the Holy Land and its fate during the reign of Saladin and the Third Crusade.

Yet as I have argued all along, this is part of Chahine's objective. The film is a testament to his personal and political outlook, as a Christian Egyptian espousing the Arab Nationalist tenets of supra-sectarian equality between Arab Christians and Arab Muslims under a secular Arab state—and led by Nasser. While the purpose of the film was to portray the modern Nasser as the medieval Saladin, the director took the opportunity to produce a film of majestic proportions that heavily engages Christian figures, teachings, language, and symbols. Not only did Chahine attempt to exoterically equate Islam and Christianity, but, as this analysis has demonstrated, he went one giant step further by esoterically projecting his own faith onto the center of the film.

Malek Khouri elaborates on Chahine's stance here by providing an example of how Chahine wanted to reduce Christian-Muslim tensions:

Recognizing that his audience would include both Muslim and Christian Arabs, Chahine sought to underplay Christian-Muslim enmity, admitting that the chaotic fragmentation of the images of the charging Faranga was used to "create the impression of violence without showing actual violence."¹²⁸

He also indicates that in the scene after Saladin's final victory over Richard, and when the audiences simultaneously hear the call for prayer and the Christian hymns during Christmas Eve, Chahine "uses the familiarity with the two religious references to reiterate a powerful message that rejects religion-based sectarianism."¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 47 (references omitted).

¹²⁹ Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 51.

This study, however, goes even further by arguing that Chahine not only attempts to portray an amicable rapprochement between Muslims and Christians, but he also, as I have argued, deploys a didactic message about Christianity and its values to his predominantly Arab Muslim audiences. Even Chahine himself admitted to the need for education to achieve not only victory over the enemy, in this case the Western imperialist bloc and Israel, but also to address the Arabs' *own* divisive problems when he states:

Before achieving victory against others one needs to first conquer one's own demons, prepare the adequate power to confront the invader or those who are planning to oppress him. ... You need to provide the means for the success of such confrontation, and this is why the film emphasizes issues such as *education*, organization and unifying resources. Saladin was able to defeat the Crusaders because he succeeded in uniting people and adequately prepared for his battles.¹³⁰

In fact, Chahine does not stop there, but his message of Muslim-Christian harmony, as he informs us, is even a didactic directed towards Western Christian audiences as well:

In *Saladin*, I was not hesitant in telling Christians that they were wrong in coming over to occupy our land. I, myself a Christian, have lived in the heart of Muslim culture where 90 percent of the people whom I loved were Muslims. ... From the times of Andalusia to [today's] Alexandria, the idea of diversity within a predominantly Muslim culture has been much more integrated than it has ever been within mostly Christian societies. These are not just words. ... This is how I exactly feel.¹³¹

The film *Saladin*, therefore, is a laudable attempt by Chahine to educate his Arab Muslim audiences on his own faith, a task he took up in this film in order to reject sectarianism and its dangers in mid-twentieth century Egypt and the wider Arab world. Thus lies yet another merit to this masterpiece—its universal, timeless message, and urgent reminder, of the dangers of internal strife and religious divisions that had plagued the modern Middle East,

¹³⁰ Quoted in Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 46 (emphasis added).

¹³¹ Quoted in Khouri, *Arab National Project*, 45.

which, judging from the events of the past two decades or so, continues to do so even in our present day.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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